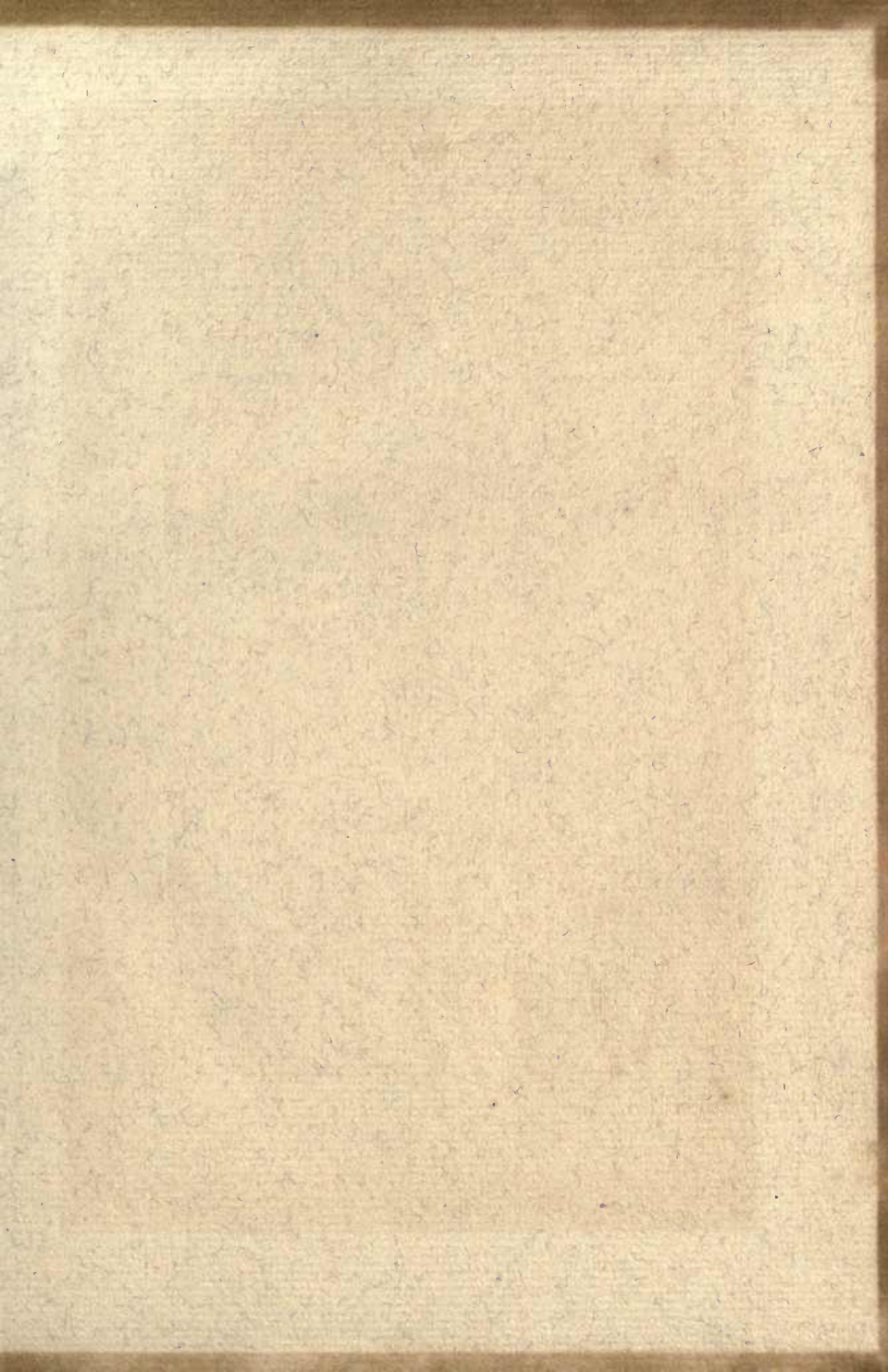


UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A
0
0
0
1
2
0
0
2
2
9

2



**THE ROYAL LIBRARY
HISTORICAL SERIES**

*Translated from the
French*

THE LOVE-LETTERS
OF
MIRABEAU

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

LONDON

ARTHUR L. HUMPHREYS

1909

MIRIAM'S LOVE-LETTERS

THE FIRST VOLUME

NEW YORK

1880

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR
LENOX
TILDEN

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

I

No, no, my dearest, far be it from me to think that you have not felt, and felt deeply, the awful silence that has encompassed us for nearly two months. Charminglly frank as you are, who could fail to believe you, especially when you have had no means of finding out how I fare? Who would not be convinced by your bitter lamentations, your unceasing agitation, your language, at once so strong, so simple, so varied and so natural? I can see that it is not I alone who have been unhappy; and that in spite of the distractions by which you are surrounded, you have been no whit less unhappy than I. Oh, my dear, my dear, I should indeed be cruel to myself if I did not believe in your love. For what else remains? What consolation have I else? What hope? You may think that it would be more than unjust of me to doubt your love, that it would even be ungrateful. But be on your guard, sweet-heart: that your love in the past is more than proved by your behaviour in the past, is very true; but the present alone can answer for your love in the present. It is true that I have the highest opinion of you that ever lover had of his mistress: I have told you over and over again that I am more

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

enamoured of your virtues than your charms; and a simple word, in which you lay bare your soul to me, is dearer than any of those ravishing graces of which the idea alone is enough to send me into an ecstasy.

After this somewhat formal declaration, I cannot but think that you will, nay, that you ought, knowing the opinion I have of you, the bright star of my firmament, to pardon my fears respecting the shifts and subtleties of my enemies, whom naturally I mistrust. You are so young, so unhappy, so very ill-content; I am so deep in love, and, for that reason, so exacting and so very hard to please, that it is not surprising that at times I tremble; but only when you do not write and restore confidence to the heart of your dejected lover. From all that I have written to you during the past eight months you cannot fail to see that you have in your own hands the power to calm my mind and set my heart at rest. No, I do not think it 'greater than thine own.' Who, better than Gabriel, can judge of your tenderness, of that inexhaustible tenderness of heart which constitutes all my happiness in the past, the present and the future? But I have the right to assert that my love for you is even greater than yours for me, seeing that you are infinitely more lovable than I, and of that I am the better judge,—setting on one side, if possible, that predisposition to love which is common to us both,—because I have known far more of women than you are ever likely to know of men. There never was a man more capable of

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

self-sacrifice, of simple-hearted devotion and sincerity than I, it is true; and, what is more, there never was a man capable of so exclusive a love as mine, for, generally speaking, man's habit of deceiving woman renders him incapable of constancy, whereas that very habit in me has led me to sigh for a mistress such as you, whom I never thought to find, and whom I prize the more for having so long desired. But it is certain that there do exist men more worthy of a woman's love than I, upon whom has blown the bitter wind of adversity; and never was there woman yet whose attitude of mind and habits of thought were more calculated to captivate my senses than you. I could never love a woman with little intelligence, for I must reason with my mistress. But exceptional cleverness wearies me: who more exceptional than Madame de Feuillans? To me affectation is to nature what rouge is to beauty, not only useless, that is to say, but harmful to that which it would improve. I was therefore constrained to search for a mind at once artless and alert, sane, yet lively and cheerful. I have so few of the ordinary prejudices of man, my thoughts are so rarely in accordance with those of the majority, that a silly woman, steeped in littlenesses and a slave to the proprieties, would never suit me. I have found you brave, energetic, stout-hearted, determined. Nor is that all. The qualities I possess are ill-proportioned: my susceptibility is prodigious, my vivacity excessive; she in whom I would find my delight must be, above all, of a gentle spirit and an indulgent nature; nor did I ever dare to hope that

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

such precious qualities were to be met with in company with other virtues, much more rare, and hitherto regarded as incompatible with them. Yet, O my dearest wife, I have found them all in your dear person! Think, then, what you must be to me: in you are the very foundations of my happiness laid! Do not judge me harshly for trembling at the mere idea of a danger which seemed to threaten such happiness, nor blame me if I regard you as a being infinitely more precious to me than I can ever be to you. My character is formed, yours is not; my principles were fixed, ere you had so much as thought of the necessity of having any. The world could easily have bound you by other ties, afforded happiness of a different kind from that you have gathered in the arms of your Gabriel, but Sophie was indispensable to my happiness, and she alone could assure it to me.—How well I know what you mean by that repugnance you so strikingly describe, with which even a woman's kiss may fill you at times. You are so much in love, my darling! How I rejoice at the thought of new feelings such as these: for it is to love alone that they are due. Alas, it is but natural! Cold caresses do no more than recall those ardent transports for which you long so dearly and which you will never find again save on my breast. O my dearest! It was such things as these that angered me against Saint-Belin, even before she had given me real justification for my hatred and contempt; to feel that you were lavishing upon her those sweet nothings which to me were all my happiness and that often your caresses were so fervent and

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

passionate that you found it necessary to put a check upon yourself! Was it not Sophie herself who wrote to me that she was at times seized with feelings that drove her in hot haste from the bed she shared with her friend. Methinks even the simplest of favours ought to be reserved for love, and of such precious favours one of your own sex seemed to be robbing me: I ought rather to say one of your own sex alone; for a single glance, graciously bestowed by you upon one of my sex, would drive me headlong to despair.

I am just back from my walk, over which I have taken a considerable time to-day. It was very hot: I fear you must be feeling it too, for you seemed to me very susceptible to the heat, and the burden you are carrying must make the hot weather still less endurable, seeing that it becomes heavier day by day. Happily the hot weather will be over before you are brought to bed; but (and this is most important) when your time comes, do not have great fires lit in your bedroom, and remember, in spite of all that the nurses may say, that excessive warmth is responsible for many more accidents to women in childbed than any imprudences due to a desire for ventilation.

Alas, yes, adored one, our precarious and dependent position in Holland has deprived us of many precious moments. You used to grieve at the idea of your friend being the stipendiary of a library, and could have wished his labours had been honorary: certainly, if they had, I should have been far lazier and should assuredly not have risen so

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

early in the morning. We were so fond of bed! For when in bed, no matter how we fought, we never could quarrel for long together. Think, O my precious one! how one of your kisses never failed to restore calm to my countenance and peace to my heart. Ah! who could resist your sweet caresses, your kindness, your charming docility? For it is certain that I was often unjust, or at anyrate over-ready to take offence, especially during the first month, when Belin, wretched creature that she was, would never leave me in peace for a moment. She even went so far as to tell me that Draweman had wanted to kiss you on the stairs: and if she did not say that he actually did kiss you, it seemed all the more probable that he did, and that she had only refrained from saying so lest the affliction should prove greater than I could bear. And later, when Changuion overwhelmed me with work, I showed, from time to time, almost involuntarily, signs of brusqueness and impatience, which you might have taken as anger against yourself,—but quite wrongly. I confess that my jealousy is boundless: your lessons in Italian were torture to me, and undertaken much against my will. I used often to scold you for a grammatical blunder, when in reality I was only endeavouring to conceal the true feelings that swayed me. . . .

I tell you all my secrets, my darling, confident that you will pardon me, as you have already pardoned me in the past; but of this at least you must rest assured, that, although convinced that I have sometimes been wrong in taking offence at a

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

mere nothing, I do not deserve so much praise as you seem to think for becoming so easily reconciled. True it is that my pain was not less great because it had its origin in some very slight cause. But your eyes, which gazed so tenderly upon me and which you turned away with such ineffable sadness when you saw my brow still darkened, were not long in persuading me to relent, and from the depths of my heart welled that love which I sought to convey to you by my life. Taking him for all in all, my dearest, your Gabriel has many faults, but they may perhaps be forgiven him, when one thinks of the slings and arrows of his outrageous fortune, and, too, of his boundless love and stainless honour. Yes, I agree with what you say, and would even venture to repeat it: few lovers can show a love equal to mine; but then only one woman is capable of inspiring it. . . .

P . . . has alluded to another visit to Lyons. Of course he ought not to be long; but, as you say, everything seems nowadays to drag itself out eternally, and I already begin to fear that we shall have long to wait. Alas! to think that it is now only the ninth day since I have seen him: but, as you say so truly, never before have we known such privations; what we suffer is almost too much to endure all at one time. But after all, my first letters were too gloomy; these should give you greater pleasure. Moreover, they refer to things essential, and contain advice which I cannot be too early in sending you. You will easily see that for yourself, my dearest, and it induces me to hope you

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

will urge P . . . to return as quickly as he can : I have the more need of him as I can only hope for more paper after his visit ; I warned you that I should soon be threatened with the direst poverty. I have already sounded the turnkeys, but they affect not to hear me. It will assuredly be a great comfort to you when you can picture me with some fifteen or twenty sheets in front of me. At present I can see nothing for it but pilfering ; and, although, thanks to my prodigiously covetous disposition, I write to you for at least four hours a day, it seems to me very little. My eyesight grows daily weaker ; I would gladly lose it in your service, if at all : hence I would consecrate my whole time to you ; and that is long enough, as you well know. Farewell, my dear and only friend, my love, my wife, my Sophie-Gabriel. Only say that you could never bring yourself to live without me. Time should take nothing from our love, my Sophie ! It is time alone that can confirm the truth of love and test its steadfastness. After all, is it not within the bosom of this dread time, which sometimes flies so swiftly, but now is creeping on a broken wing, that all our hopes are enfolded ? For what would life be worth, if, while depriving us every day of some one of our past happinesses, it held no promise for us in the future ? Oh, my dear, let us take heart ; if it be possible, let our love wax greater in the thought of all that we have lost, all that we hope at length to gain. Let us keep ever before us the fact that honour stands for us where happiness should stand : let us pray for this end unceas-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

ingly, for prayer alone will give us strength to attain it.

August 9th—Saturday.

I have been thinking of you all night; and yet I slept: but I woke at least twenty times, and each time suffered cruelly: with the vision of my fondest, my only love before my eyes, I wake, all eager to clasp her to my breast, when lo! just as I think to draw her towards me, she is gone and I am left desolate and alone. My dearest, you, too, must often experience such bitter pangs; I need only refer to them to disclose all their bitterness to you, who know them too, so well. In the daytime one does not fall a prey to such mistakes, for the illusion is never then so complete; but, at night, though at one moment we are wetting our pillows with our tears, at another we bury low our heads and call on sleep to bring us the illusion once again. . . .

I think with you, my dearest, that we could manage very well on a moderate income, very ill if we were to make a show and live on a magnificent scale. But it is worth remembering that we need not necessarily keep up a great establishment, even if we had great riches, especially when we have decided, as we have, to live among strangers in a foreign country. However considerable the desires of two fond lovers may be, it is nevertheless a good thing to be spared the unpleasantness of having to forego them for lack of money. As we live but for ourselves and for our children, we can easily transport ourselves at will to

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

the land of our choice, sure that wherever we may be, we shall always be happy in ourselves. You know that your lover is ever longing to afford you some fresh pleasure ; that he has one extravagance, his taste in books ; that a desire to see you elegantly, although not over grandly, attired, is very strong in him ; that he will not rest content, in fact, until he has restored to you all that he has cost you. We shall, moreover, probably have several children, if only we may soon meet again ; to shelter them from any rough usage at the hands of the lawyers, we ought for their sakes to economise on our expenditure. But I reckon that if you were to buy one of my estates from some third party, we could provide for all emergencies. In any case, do not wish for only a small fortune for us ; we can enjoy a large fortune well enough, you will find, without forfeiting our liberty to anyone, or having to adopt principles foreign to our own. Ah ! I know it well enough ; you could not be dismayed at any way of living, however retired ; in fact, the more retired, the better it would please you : well ! surely your life in Holland was a capital probation ! But you knew, dear one, did you not, that your lover did not have it in his power to procure you any distractions there ? You would have had to mix with a very ill-assorted company, and we should have had only too much of your strait-laced Coul, who has not yet forgiven me for having had nothing to do with him and his enormous bulk. I myself at that time never wanted to go out, because I felt I could not take you with me ; perhaps I should have

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

done better if I had, because we might have succeeded in freeing ourselves from dependence on that rascally Le Quesne. But after Crévenna's example, you must see what we have to hope for from our wealthy friends.

P . . . told me the whereabouts of my mother's convent; I had quite forgotten: be sure you get him to tell you. You might even promise not to write to her without his knowledge, especially as at present it would be really dangerous to attempt it. It is to me that you should write without ceasing, my dearest one, to me who live only to read your letters, hoping one day that I may see you again. . . .

You see that I have not a moment in which to speak to him about seals, signets and so on. I asked for pencils and coloured chalks: but I was told I could not have them. The seals would cost us next to nothing; we need only have them made in steel; but it is not a matter that is at all urgent so long as neither of us is free. I want to have a seal made with the following charming motto, so short and pointed in Latin:—'*A te principium, tibi desinet.*' I interpret it thus: 'With thee love began, with thee will it end.' How much is expressed in those five words! It shall be my motto till I die. You yourself have chosen the one we have in common: '*L'amour brave le sort*'; we might substitute: '*L'amour a soumis le sort*' for it, equally well. I cannot remember a word of the verses of the signet-ring; you might send them

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

to me; but none of this is urgent. Save all the money you can for your lying-in, I beg of you. I greatly approve of your idea for my ring; but I have no wish to alter the one I am wearing; besides, it is too old and battered to allow of any alteration. I am quite willing for you to sacrifice a little of your hair to make a fresh ring; your own can serve as a model for the monogram; I could keep it by me here without letting anyone see it; but I only consent on the condition that the expenses of fashioning it and the value of the setting do not exceed that of the ring itself; in that case I refuse to have anything to do with it: let P . . . consult a jeweller. It is, however, really to yourself that you should make the present; but I make no objection to it provided you abide by the condition I have already laid down. . . .

My watch will certainly not be restored to me so long as I am here: I was sorry to see how badly it had been knocked about in P . . . 's pocket; but I shall have it repaired; I would not, were I my own master, be without the watch so long as I live.— I am at present on milk-food, on account of the weakness in my chest.

My dear one, when I think of that unfortunate woman who, it appears, must die, and who seems only to have recovered her reason to enable her fully to realise her awful position, I am moved to pity; the circumstances of her abandonment by her cowardly and treacherous seducer have stirred me to the depths of my soul. Who knows but that the poor woman, had she met with an honest man, would

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

have been honest, too, although it is true she was weak, and, in consequence, a likely victim to depravity. Most women, and men too, are no more than what circumstances make of them. It is not the wickedness of the woman that ought to be punished, but the infamy of her seducer. It is to a man such as he that M. le président de R . . . ventures to compare me. I trust that you will never, as long as you live, forgive him for the insult. . . .

Ah, yes, my dearest! 'when life is not happiness, it is torture'; but love and hope do their best to render it supportable. Do not lose heart, my Sophie! to lose heart is to debase one's soul and deprive oneself of one's last resource.

II

You seem very badly off for books, my poor darling. I am glad you have read Young; in him there are to be found a few sublime things, many strange things and some foolish ones: but such a book goes straight to the heart when one is unhappy, and, in consequence, more sensitive to impressions of all kinds. So they do not allow you to read novels? Poor people, do they not know that when one is in love, nothing seems so flat and unprofitable as a novel? When you come to re-read Héloïse, you will disagree with Rousseau in a great many respects; but you will also light upon passages obviously inspired by true passion, ex-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

pressed as he alone can express them. But none of these great writers seem to us any longer masters of their art, when it is a question of love; have we not unveiled that evasive god's most furtive secrets? P . . . tells me that he will lend you Linguet's diary. Look and see whether any mention is made of Watron, and remember how you promised to take notes for me for my great work. Occupation of that kind can never fail to afford you pleasure, because it must continually remind you of your absent lover. You will understand that I am writing nothing for the moment, now that I have heard that my papers will be laid before the police. You would hardly believe how much it upsets me and how completely it dries up the fount of my imagination. Except for that about which I wrote to you, and the conversations we had on the subject, I have nothing but mere notes; I have no heart to hazard a reflection of any kind. You might also note any remarkable thought that strikes you especially as coinciding with my own principles, or being opposed to them, being careful always, if you quote, to quote accurately. P . . . must subscribe to a library for you and get you a catalogue of the books to be obtained at it; it is dreadful only to be able to borrow a few books, and those not particularly illuminating. . . .

Alas! my dearest, I am quite willing to work my hardest on my own behalf, but you know what it all amounts to: writing letters to which I get no answers. I have already sent about a dozen to M. Lenoir; and what good has it done me? But I

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

shall keep on ; I only want a permit and, to get that, I must see M. de R . . . I hoped to see him here at the Feast of the Assumption, but he is too much occupied with the orders he has to give for Sunday, the day on which all Paris is coming to Vincennes. We shall probably not see him the day after tomorrow for that reason : in that case I shall get him to write to M. Lenoir, all the more as I should like him to feel ashamed for having so neglected me. I do not exaggerate in the least when I say that I have neither breeches, nor shoes and stockings, nor a coat. My trousers are all torn ; my pants will have to be bleached. I haven't a single pair of stockings without holes. One of my coats is in rags, the other dirtier than a dishcloth. All the King's prisoners have their immediate needs supplied to them : ought I to want for everything simply because I am held a prisoner by my father ? I shall write a sharp letter to M. Lenoir on the subject, in the hope of rousing his ire against the venerable Friend of Humanity. . . .

Poor darling, you must be hot ; I am suffocated with the heat here in my cell, and these walls must be at least seven or eight times as thick as yours. Alas ! that no lover's kisses refresh your jaded spirits ! But this heat will make you forget the heat of your passion, and we are certainly not meant to die of anything but longing and desire. Farewell, my bride ; farewell, my well-beloved, my friend, my heart's elect, Gabriel's happiness, the adoréd one whom he will never cease to love. I embrace you as often as you could wish, as often as

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

I can without hurting you or depriving you of your tongue. I could even bite you all over, and, jealous of the very whiteness of your skin, cover you with the marks of my kisses, kisses so passionate that they would seem to draw the very life out of you. Farewell, dear heart, kiss me again and yet again.

August 16th—Saturday.

Had I known of it at the time I should have been terribly worried about your inflammation, my dearest; for not only is such an illness unfortunate enough in itself, but it is doubly to be regretted on account of its evil effects on the little child you carry. This is the time of year for all kinds of fruit: no doubt it tempts you, for the fruit of this district is very luscious; but be careful not to eat of it in excess, especially if at all over-ripe. O my dear one! what would become of your Gabriel if you were to fall ill? . . .

I wept bitterly when I read again the pitiful words wrung from you by the absence of P . . ., which deprived you of letters from me; but yet they were not the bitterest of tears, for I see how dearly I am loved and I can almost forgive the misery which affords me fresh proof of your devotion. Your heart has suffered grievously, sweet-heart; you seemed indeed almost in despair. All that you have been thinking I too have thought; for I too feared lest Briançon might again delude P . . . into thinking ill of us; but, more than that, I trembled at the thought that M. de R . . ., annoyed that P . . . had had special permission to see me,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

might interfere and prevent me from seeing him. Ah! could I only cherish it, that heart of yours, when it is wrung with pain; it would soon revive: its frenzied beating would trouble you no more; my lips and my hands would calm it in a moment, and bring it back to life. I have often experienced, before getting your letters, and even this very day, when I allow my thoughts to dwell too long on our miseries, or our separation and the fatal circumstances connected with it; I have, I say, experienced symptoms similar to those described by you. My heart contracts one moment and swells the next, as if it would burst through my body. This is preceded by an icy coldness which, as quick as thought, runs from one end of my body to the other, and presses on my head so as almost to stupefy me. If my tears refused to flow at this crisis, I think I should expire. . . .

I promise you that I will always keep you informed of everything new that may occur as soon as I am aware of it myself: I know only too well that doubt and uncertainty are the worst of all our ills. A misery that is known may cause us heartfelt pain and bring floods of tears to our eyes; but we can at least seek to remedy it: uncertainty tortures and torments us; it is as it were a ravenous vulture which leaves us no moment of peace. . . .

I long for you to be by yourself as much as you do, for distress that you cannot conceal is the hardest of all to bear. Unless you are alone you cannot think uninterruptedly of our

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

affairs. Just when your heart is crying out for solitude, you are obliged to listen to proposals that are distasteful to you; or you are overwhelmed with unnecessary attentions. When you have a house of your own, you can at least choose your time for work and your time for play, and then the society of others will seem less irksome to you and have a far more salutary effect. You will write long letters to me; you will think of me more; you will not love me more dearly, but you will tell me of it more. O dear love, never shall you regret that you purchased those nine months of happiness so dearly. Few lovers have known as many, you say; and who among those have paid so high a price for them? Who have deserved them as we have? None can compare with Sophie-Gabriel in her devotion to her lover, her courage and her unflinching kindness. Who would ask for help, indeed? Have we not our own strong arms? Are not your actual means of subsistence assured? What matters the rest? Our happiness is in ourselves: wealth cannot touch it. No need to come and prate to us of the snares and pitfalls into which we might fall! I became necessary to a man who was too vile to be generous, too much beholden to me to leave me to my fate. Had he not felt certain that he was about to lose me, he would not have acted as he did; he would have set me free, or at least appeased our greedy creditors; once out of Le Quesne's grip and we should have had no more to fear. O Sophie, Sophie! Would that I had chosen

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

another shelter! But, alas, you have yourself seen how step by step I sank lower into the abyss in which we now lie groaning. . . .

Pay no heed to that common practice of bleeding, as applied to a woman who is pregnant: there is no justification for it, provided nature indicates no special reason, such as severe headaches, fainting fits and the like,—symptoms that need neither doctor nor surgeon to recognise. Full-blooded women more than others are subject to kinds of illnesses that are best cured by bleeding. I do not think you are specially full-blooded, from all I have observed. In any case, consult a competent surgeon and leave the advice of nurses and old women for those whom it may concern. . . .

I have no idea what reason M. Martin can have for tormenting you and offering you his protection. This M. Martin of yours displeases me mightily, especially as he seems to have a grudge against P . . . Send me your impression of this queer character, and warn P . . . to be on his guard against him. The prisoners do not come under the jurisdiction of such as he; at least, I think not. I forgot again to-day to ask Fontellian the name of the man who has command of them; he often comes here with M. Lenoir. I do not know if he has a better opinion of P . . .; he is certainly a big-wig, practically an Under-Minister like his master.

Your mother is greatly mistaken if she thinks I have no ideas beyond a hard and vigorous style in

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

writing. One should write nobly, but not passionately. Moderation bespeaks a calmly thought out conclusion, while violence is usually only the outcome of a passing mood. Let her not think for a moment that I withhold my respect, but from respect to love is a far cry and the latter does not come to command. What she called a shameless letter was a very proper letter; what she calls shameless lessons are, I venture to assert, honourable and virtuous lessons, of which, no doubt, you have but little need, but which are the only lessons I can teach you, my darling, for they are those of love. I delight in my mistress's charms and am enchanted by her beauty; I am the most covetous and ardent of men, but I do not corrupt her. We may enjoy without corrupting; but the devout, who are harlots first and saints afterwards, do not know this. That vain outward show which they call piety is the compliment they pay to virtue. They use it in their youth as a cloak to their merriment; they consider that in later life they can atone for everything by pious mummery and above all sour-faced severity. To the minds of Sophie and Gabriel virtue and tenderheartedness are one; methinks that we owe all to those who have done all for us; that a woman's honour does not consist in having no lovers, but in having one and cleaving to him alone; that the honour of both sexes consists in holding to one's promises, in being faithful to one's oaths, grateful, steadfast, incapable of giving way under misfortune or persecution, incapable too, either from inconstancy or cowardice, of betraying

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

the being who has sacrificed his all for honour's sake. This is what we mean by honour, this is our religion, these our principles: woe to him who thinks us shameless! It is not for such as he, with his barren heart, to judge us.

How bitterly you made me weep over the words: 'I have no means of working here!' But I observe you add, with a dignity that becomes you well, that you 'would not work,' even if you had; that you would only work for your lover and your little son. . . . Ah! Sophie, you know how glad he would be even to dig the ground for your dear sake! You are ever the same, my dearest, ever unique in your delicacy of feeling, your courage, your love. . . . I would have you know that you are loved as never woman was loved before.—O my Sophie! how often have I not thought over that which you wrote to me in a sudden access of grief, that we should indeed have been happy had our lives but come to an end at the moment when we bade each other farewell. Yet let us not think too ill of our lives, for are there not the days when we get our letters? I sometimes think that it is when we have no troubles that we ought not to mind whether we die or not, because by continuing to live we can do no more than contract the manifold ills that flesh is heir to. Often, too, do I think how cruel a thing it would be to have to renounce a future that may make amends to us for all our suffering, by restoring us to happiness if but for a single night. So long as we have hope we have no right to give up what little consolation we may

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

derive from our letters, which must to some extent temper the winds of adversity. Your beloved, who is no less unhappy than you are, and who assuredly is more weary of his life, implores you to take heart, dear love; and you know well that he never gives you advice that it would be cowardly to follow. Dear Sophie, pray do not begin to imagine that the seed is dead within you: you are conjuring up fancies for the sake of torturing yourself. Some children begin to move far later than others. Is it possible to believe that Gabriel and Sophie have produced a senseless being? No, no; why, at the very moment that I am endeavouring to reassure you, you have already felt it move, the babe that is so dear to you; you have proofs that it is alive; you can feel the beating of its heart, which gathers strength from yours. How impatiently I await the news! How gladly would I hear of your safe delivery! What tears of compassion will I not shed! What horrible restlessness is not in store for me! And then again, how sweet to hear the blessed name of father! . . . Poor little child! . . . so young and so defenceless to be exposed to the bitter stings of fortune! Will love watch over him? Alas! does not each moment only add to our anxieties, to our troubles! What a burden is life, so soon as love no longer pours upon our wounds drops from that philtre in whose healing waters our hearts are steeped! . . . Never, my Sophie, never have two beings been so wretched; and never has courage been upheld by so true, so ardent, so steadfast an affection.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

III

Yes, my dearest, yes, my candour has always prevailed with you, and never will it play me false. It is so natural a quality of mine that I trust it overmuch, with my enemies, for instance, and those who are unworthy of my confidence. My countenance speaks for me, even when I do not speak myself; and you must often have seen how carefully I have to prepare myself in advance, when I wish to adopt a disguise. Unless I keep myself well in hand, I am bound to reveal my true self; for every movement that I make helps to reveal what is passing in my mind. It is the inevitable result of possessing in excess what is really a very estimable quality; I must certainly endeavour to correct the defect; I have in part succeeded already: but never with my Sophie need I look to conceal my true self; I have everything to gain by showing her the innermost workings of my heart, where she reigns supreme and alone. The traces of jealousy which she finds there will seem to her no more than a fresh mark of homage, which she will take in good part. I shall not even keep from you things that may afflict you, because I know so well that it is a true consolation for you to know all my misery and just how wretched I am. Doubts and fears augment our ills a thousandfold, and it is impossible to shape our lives by that which is not clearly defined, but only to be seen through the veil of some dense fog. . . .

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

Change? Ah, no! it is not possible; never will Gabriel have need to clear himself from the charge of so atrocious a crime, of which, indeed, it is impossible for you even to imagine him capable without yourself affording him a proof that you hold him in utter contempt. But pray do not imagine that considerations of duty and of honour have aught to do with my constancy. I love you because I live. Love is the breath of my life. To think of ceasing to adore you seems to me as absurd as to think of continuing to live without a heart to pump the blood through my veins or without lungs wherewith to breathe. My Sophie, I can take no more merit to myself for loving you, than the streams for flowing into the sea or the fire for burning; it is my nature, the very essence of my life. I would assuredly still love you were I free to choose between indifference or love, between constancy or inconstancy; but I have no such freedom; I love you, for I cannot do otherwise. . . . Love me likewise, if you can; but not in gratitude to me, for I deserve none. . . .

Why need Alexandrine sup with you if you do not desire it? I wish you to send me the minutest details of your daily life. Alas! I long every minute of the day to see you, to follow you about, to hear your dear voice. How fortunate is she, this constant companion of your day; how I envy her her lot! Could I but replace her, for one short hour! But, alas! I must not begrudge you this feeble consolation. . . . For have I not my little Sophie. . . . Come, come, I can avenge myself better than you

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

think ; and I dare swear that my representative cannot accuse you of as many infidelities as she could accuse me. There are very few women, my dear one, who are not contemptible : certainly there is only one who knows how to love, and you are she. I read with great pleasure of your indignation at hearing of the misconduct of Alexandrine ; the discovery only affords you a further proof of the venality of your sex ; for her companion in sin is as contemptible as she, for having told you things that are bound to deprive her of your good graces. But after all, you could not fail to suspect her depravity from the moment you saw her indulging in familiarities of so indecent a nature with her jailer. But by what possible chance did you come to see them eating together out of the same plate ? Do you eat with them ? Surely not, surely I am not to believe that ; I pray that it may not be so. Keep all such persons at a distance and let this man never be more to you than your footman ; in fact, he is only that. Gentle you may be with him, and even considerate, but affable, no ; and familiar . . . a thousand times no, especially in your position. It is in times of adversity that we owe ourselves most respect.

You find it strange to see an actor in that position, my dearest one ; but I assure you that this Clairval, of whom Alexandrine is enamoured, has had his pick of the smartest women in Paris ; in fact, he has rendered valuable service to a branch of the Choiseul family, by presenting it with an heir. And then again, Alexandrine no doubt threw her-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

self at his head; for nowadays he is far past his prime and no longer possesses those talents by which women are so easily seduced: the fact that she has given herself to him proves that she is of those who become the rivals of all other women, without themselves troubling to love any one among their lovers. She has him because he was once the fashion. These fine speakers are still finer doers, believe me. All this brings to my mind a certain Madame Carrouge, of whom I do not think I have ever spoken to you. I took a fancy to her because she was for ever telling me of her first love, who, she said, would also be her last. She was the friend and confidante of Brémont and Latour-du-Pin, and she knew from them that I had a reputation as a good comrade in a tête-à-tête. I knew the object of her love well, a little man, lame, weakly and absent! I thought it would be a good joke to take his place on the very day of his return. He came back in the evening and was due to go to her the same night, as I learnt from Brémont, who told me that Madame Carrouge would not take supper with us for that reason. What did I do? I called on the tender-hearted lover and complained of the sorry trick she was playing us; I urged her to come with me; she told me she was waiting for Guérin; I assured her that I would bring her back quite early: she refused; I insisted, I endeavoured to take her by force; she resisted still, dragging me down on to the sofa, where I had the honour. . . . It proved so easy a matter that I almost felt ashamed of it. 'Ah, ha! admit now,' said I, 'that

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

although you thought yourself excluded from other loves, since you gave yourself irrevocably to Guérin, yet am I more to you than he.' Before admitting it, I think she wanted fresh proofs of what I said; but, knowing that Brémond was waiting for me, I was cautious. When Carrouge saw that she was not to be given an opportunity of a fresh offence to her 'honour,' she deplored her most unhappy lot, wept, fell into a rage and even tried to scratch my face. I took my departure and have not been near her since. That, my dear, is your heroic lover; they are all the same; Cabris was the same and Latour-du-Pin, who was the most eloquent woman in the world on the subject of affection, charm, love, passion.

Ah! how true it is that the more one really feels the simpler is one's language! and how good and pure must you be to allow yourself to be the dupe of all this grand display, with its false ring! It is an easy matter to decide whether a woman is really in love, especially when we take care to consider her in her relations with other men. A heart filled with the object of its affection is not susceptible to anything else. Love is so delicate a flower that the least puff of a strange wind kills it; and I shall never believe that a woman who can find pleasure in the society of other men and in listening without repugnance to their chaff and silly gossip would ever be capable of loving one man tenderly and constantly. My opinion should count for something in the matter of love and sensibility; I may without arrogance say that I know how to love.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

You cannot believe what pleasure you gave me with your neat epigram: '*J'ai le cœur trop plein de toi pour pouvoir m'attacher.*' I have always been convinced that even a keen friendship was a kind of infidelity to love, not, of course, criminal, but one which reveals the feebleness of love's tie. Moreover, I have to think thus, dear heart of mine, to justify myself; for, since I have loved you, I have loved nothing else: I am susceptible to feelings of emotion, of pity, of eagerness to oblige, but feelings of affection for others are entirely strange to me. When once the heart is on fire it is either quite insensible to what is only lukewarm, or lukewarmness gives actual pain. You can hardly imagine how I hated to see how great an influence Saint-Belin had over you, even before I proved her wicked, false, untrue. Had it gone on, I should never have believed that your love was really strong and durable. Exclusive confidence, exclusive tenderness, these alone seem to me to be the true marks of a lasting passion: they are the marks of mine, and you will hardly contradict me when I say that there is no passion in the wide world so tender—except perhaps your own, I hasten to add, for fear of offending you! Yes, dear Sophie, I feel, from the depths of my soul, that our hearts were made for one another; you alone can keep me constant, you alone have taught me what love is; for you must not think, O my beloved, that I had ever known love ere you came to me. The fever in my blood had no more in common with the transports with which you fill me than you yourself have with

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

the women to whom I paid homage before you. I have told you again and again, that the perfume of your breath as you press your lips to mine stirs me a thousand times more deeply than any emotions, however poignant, that I have ever felt in the arms of other women. It is a triumph that you may not fully appreciate, my dearest, but it consoles me when I think of how I have laid my homage at the feet of so many other beautiful women, by showing me the difference between the desires of nature and those of love; proving to me, consequently, that I have never loved any but you. My dear, you know most of my experiences in the search after pleasure. The vigour of my constitution would appear to have been established beyond question by the multiplicity and the variety of what I am pleased to call my enjoyments. Never did I keep long to one woman; only once, by her wantonness, did a certain Messalina (whom I need not name) think to put an end to my life. The rest of my existence has been but as that of other men, until you came. Those laurels that I thought I had won so gloriously, senseless fool that I was, has not love completely shrivelled them up! How lovely the garlands of flowers that now take the place of a few dry blades of grass! Into what a frenzy of delight have you thrown me! What victories have I not won! O Sophie, Sophie! how I love to think of it, and to think, too, that it was my strength only that fell short of my desire! But the ardour that fires my senses is not the best proof that I have never loved before. It is the

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

union of our souls that puts a seal upon our love: it is this unbounded devotion, this great passion, without equal in the world, that makes the universe seem in our eyes no more than a tiny atom; that causes all other interests to fade before our love, or rather, should I say, to be mingled with it; that makes all sacrifice a pleasure, all duty a sentiment; that renders virtue and vice, honour and shame, happiness and misfortune, now and for ever meaningless, except in so far as they serve love or stand in her way, delight my Sophie-Gabriel or offend her! O my love! call to mind all the tenderest words I have ever written to you, all the most ardent, the most enthusiastic, conjure them up to make a picture of them; refresh your heart with the sight; store it away in your memory; it will be only a sketch, the roughest sketch of what your lover really feels, even at times when he seems least to think of you!—Ah! tell me, tell me yet again, that you have never loved as you now love, that I alone am he whom you could ever love! Tell me this, that I may strive to believe it, O my dearest love! Above all, do not worry about what I said of those men: I had my reasons for saying what I did, believe me; had it been only that I felt suspicious, I should have held my peace. Jealous I cannot be. I know well enough that you will not see them, besides, you are not able to see them. But tell me everything, I implore you; and deny everything, either in regard to this matter, or that concerning M. P . . . to all others save myself.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

IV

My dearest, let circumstance be your guide in everything; be reserved and cautious throughout, but never fail in activity or for want of energy; be especially on your guard against your heart; it is too confiding, over pure; it is unwise to be guided by its promptings. There was a time when I believed in presentiments, but I am wiser now. And yet what happened on the 31st of July has reassured me a little: for, as soon as Bérnard opened his mouth, I thought involuntarily of P . . . I felt fully persuaded that I was going to see him, although on reflection I was convinced that I had no reason whatever for my hopes. My dreams seem to make a deep impression on me just now; I have never known myself susceptible to them before. I know perfectly well that it is our animal spirits that reveal to us, during our sleep, those ideas with which we have been chiefly occupied in the day; but that thought only brings consolation to my reason; my feelings remain uninfluenced by it. It seems to me hardly possible that there does not exist between us a kind of invisible sympathy that gives us warning from time to time of what the other is thinking or feeling. Since I received your letters my dreams have been happier, often quite delicious; formerly I had such terrible dreams. I can recall one in particular, so awful that I sprang from my bed in terror. At present, every night in my sleep I recall some episode of our love's history; often the illusion

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

is so strong that I hear you, see you, touch you. Three days ago I had a vision of the very day on which you decided to make me happy. Everything came before my eyes, down to the minutest detail. Dear God! I tremble even now to think of it. Your head resting on my arms. . . . Your lovely neck, your snowy bosom. . . . Desire burnt in my blood; my hand, my happy hand, daring to wander where it would: I remove the barriers you had till then so carefully set up. . . . Your beautiful eyes are closed. . . . You gasp, you shiver. . . . Sophie . . . dare I? O my dearest! will you make me happy? You make no reply. . . . You hide your face upon my breast. . . . Love intoxicates you, but modesty withholds you. . . . I am consumed with desire; I expire. . . . I come to life again. . . . I raise you in my arms . . . futile efforts . . . the floor recedes before my eyes . . . I gaze eagerly on your charms, but may not enjoy them. . . . Love renders the victory more difficult that it may be the greater prize! Ah! how useless it all was. . . . Importunate neighbours deprived me of all my resources. . . . What moments! What delights! What ineffable constraint! What transports strangled at their birth! What pleasure-fruit all but tasted!—Yes, my beloved, I went through it all again; in my dream I leaned with you against my couch, which later on became the witness of my happy triumph. . . . At length I awoke from my troubled sleep, full of agitation, and realised how far I had been borne in my frenzy. Are you sometimes happy, O dearly beloved? Do you in your dreams seem to realise

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

all that my love means to you? Do you feel my kisses on your lips, do you press your own to mine in an abandonment of tenderness? Do your burning caresses thaw, if ever so slightly, the cold tract that keeps us apart? My darling, you tell me you dream, but you do not describe your dreams. Ought you not to render account to me of the night as well as of the day? Yes, yes, certainly you ought. The nights are more to me; they are everything to me. Recount me your illusions, O my beloved wife! Let absence be cheated; embrace your dear; let him see that he holds your imagination as well as your heart. Your soul burns so fiercely for love of me! Shall your senses be of ice, spellbound? No, no, nature has endowed you liberally; your feelings are as exquisite as your sentiments are delicate: at least, so I am pleased to think; therein rest the very foundations of my self-respect; I have none but through you, and all I have is in you. Farewell, dear, dear and matchless love; farewell, my heart's bride, the well-beloved of Gabriel; farewell, my all, my goddess, my soul, my life, my universe. Accept as many kisses as you would give. I spread them over your lovely body; not a spot is left uncovered!

.
... You see, my love, how I am ruining my eyesight in my endeavours to write small and economise paper: I already find I have to leave all close writing until the evening, when the sun shines straight into my room and affords me a better light; at other times the room is so dark that I can hardly see to write at all. Do not forget to have a

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

large supply of paper sent me very soon, or I shall be in despair. I will end by repeating all the requests I have made during the last few days : give me a clear and detailed account of everything that concerns Ma. and S. One of the two, assuredly, is a cowardly knave, if not both. Be careful not to tell anybody that I have spoken to you about them, and bear in mind that it is a friend with your interests at heart rather than a husband likely to take offence that questions you on the matter. All is forgiven, I assure you ; but, in love's dear name, have done with shiftiness, have done with lack of candour. Do not neglect the writing of those memoirs which I have asked you to write ; they will be a source of great delight to me. Write them fully, kindly, simply. I wish also that you would send me a short list of the dates of the principal events in the history of our love (at once so happy and so wretched) since I have known you. As you have marked it all off on your calendar, it will be an easy matter. Farewell, my joy, the joy of Gabriel ; farewell, my soul : I hope you will in future always sign your letters : but I warn you in advance that I shall box the ears of 'Marie-Thérèse' ; my kisses are for Sophie-Gabriel alone, and from her alone will I receive them.

V

Good-morning, sweet darling whom I love so dearly. I slept fairly well, in spite of the tempest, and feel better to-day. At present I count the days

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

on which my health does not suffer, on which I feel no worse; but I do not count those on which I enjoy peace of mind, for there are none to count. My spirit is a prey to hope and anxiety, to grief and to desire, and, although ever the slave of one sentiment, and one sentiment only, yet it is the plaything of a thousand different feelings which clash with one another and leave it no moment's peace. At times I batten on all kinds of dreadful chimeras; I give myself up to imaginings, conjectures, contrivances; I even almost persuade myself that I may count upon resources that perhaps do not exist at all except in my imagination. But, no sooner is the structure of my happiness bravely set up than a single thought will raze it to the ground; and it is far easier for me to find reasons for despair than to seize on flattering hopes wherewith to reassure myself. It is in this way that the days pass. Whatever I try to do, whatever book I take up to while away the time, it is always the same; I can give my attention to nothing. Entirely absorbed in my love as I am, I find nothing else worthy of my notice. The *belles-lettres* which once had such a fascination for your Gabriel, now fatigue and bore him. Politics, which at one time I studied so seriously, now disgust me: I cannot bear the idea of men making such sacrifices and committing so many crimes, for causes that now seem to me so paltry. History angers me, for in it I can discover naught but the perfidy of man, the tyranny of the great, the meanness of the small, and above all the cowardice of the historians themselves, who trans-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

form the noblest and most useful profession in the world into a vile traffic of flattery, error and lies. Page after page do I turn over; the matter either angers me or fails altogether to interest me. I kill time. I occupy myself with nothing, unless I happen on some link connecting my activities with the present disposition of my soul. I wake up in the morning; I read, I read over again eagerly: I meditate; I close the book to find myself back on my original thoughts. Yesterday evening I had a very vivid experience of this; I was reading a very inferior history of Louis XII. and came across an anecdote I had not read before. It appears that he was a very handsome prince and Thomassine Spinola, a Genoese by birth, fell violently in love with him at a ball given in his honour at Genoa. She spoke to him several times and in the end made an avowal of her passion, imploring him, of his gracious kindness, to become her *intendio*. So far you will see nothing in all this beyond a compliment delivered in the true style of C. M. P. L. You will also doubtless agree with me in thinking that the lady must have been of a very inflammatory disposition to fall so deeply in love with a king, not usually the wisest of mortals. But wait; poor Thomassine *will* interest you. From the moment that Louis XII. accepted her allegiance (and the writer goes out of his way to say that he accepted that of no other woman—a foolish remark, by the way) she was cold to the advances of all her other lovers and rejected the caresses and amatory attentions of her husband with disdain. She delivered

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

herself up entirely to her passion and wrote to her lover without cessation when he happened to be absent from her side. She took care to render her love precious to her fellow-citizens, by the favours she sought and received on their behalf, but in the end it cost her her life. While the King lay seriously ill, the report spread throughout Italy that he was dead. The false news killed the love-stricken Thomassine. She shut herself in a darkened chamber and, abandoning herself entirely to her grief, called on death to release her from her suffering. A burning fever consumed her in less than a week. The ungrateful Louis shed a few tears on her behalf and had an appropriate epitaph graved on the magnificent tomb which the Genoese raised in her memory. Are you not touched, my beloved? This poor Italian deserved a more grateful *intendio* than the one she loved so passionately and so hopelessly. O my dearest dear, how true it is that all that comes from the heart returns to it! How sweet to be loved for oneself alone! It is those who love in this way alone that merit the title of virtuous, they alone deserve to be called true lovers. Among a million women, is there one to whom that title can be given? Whether they be of the highest rank or of the lowest, it is all the same; that which appeals to vanity finds easiest access to the heart; and whether bestowed by the hand that holds the sceptre or the hand that works the trowel, a crown or a knot of bright ribbon is ever the lure most likely to entrap your sex. But how different is my

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

Sophie! All the frivolous nothings of a life of pleasure her soul lets go by unheeded! Not a king in all the world but he seems as naught to her beside her lover! Yes, my beloved, I verily believe that your eyes would not turn away from mine to dwell upon even the mightiest in the land, were he to come to do you homage. If Gabriel had been lowly born, of obscure parents, he would still have touched his Sophie's heart, had she but known him. It is not the title, not the grand display and vain outward show that you love, but your lover; the flower that he places in your bosom makes a heart beat that not even a jewelled diadem would seduce from its allegiance. Such is my idea of your love! Have no fears that Gabriel, who believes himself to be loved with a love such as this, is likely to be affected by ambition or honours and titles or any desire save that of possessing you! His sole aim, the goal of his whole existence, the object of all he undertakes, is to join together once more the two beings now separated by tyranny, whom death alone can part for ever.

August 23rd.

I am at this moment, my dearest, in a state of agitation similar to that which you have often described so well, which left you not a moment's respite during the time when you were daily expecting P . . . I rely on his promise, because I must; and I say to myself, as soon as I see the dawn: 'Alas! will it be to-day?' If our good P . . . lingers on the way, as he is rather prone to do, in

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

spite of all his energy, he will unwittingly be guilty of gross cruelty. He will surely hasten his steps (for he is at heart a kind man) if he takes the trouble to compare the inconvenience his delay occasions us with the causes that delay his visit. At least you know, dear love, whether he is coming or not; but I am kept on the rack of uncertainty and my hopes are invariably dashed from me by the cold hand of fear; hope and fear, clasping hands round the object of all my love, anxiety, desires and bitter pain, keep me ever in suspense. Maybe hope relieves my torments, be it ever so little; then fear comes to restore the balance, and succeeds overwell! And yet for the moment hope alone renders my lot endurable; I have fear well in hand; but I shall not keep the mastery long. Alas! my dearest, all I tell you of my grief is applicable to your own; I implore you to remember that never once do I lose sight of this sad fact. We are bound to one another by every imaginable bond, belovéd! The same pleasures have brought us happiness erewhile; now the same misfortunes weigh us both down; as you so truly say, we cleave to one another by the union of our miseries; our pains unite us. The sole happiness that remains to us, after our great felicity, is to unburden our bosoms of our grief. O my dear! how unassailable that happiness once seemed! Would that we had fled to the desert and taken refuge there, where tyrants are unknown! Only in the desert can the torch of love burn with a pure and heavenly flame. I do not think, my Sophie, there has ever before been an instance of

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

love so long preserved in the face of all that makes love vulnerable; all honour and thanks to you, dear love, who with your unfailing kindness have enchaind my fiery passions with garlands of roses. Why does all love, even the tenderest, come eventually to an end? Is it that we think to find in love pleasures and delights that are not to be found there? Is it that with nearly all mankind the imagination is more fertile than the heart is true? You, you alone are a never-failing source of joy and happiness, because caprice, ill-temper, impatience are all unknown to you; and your love is so deep that in it lie concealed every fault and every infirmity of your Gabriel. What could ever disturb the sweet serenity of your unruffled brow, a serenity which owes its origin to your virtues, your purity of soul, your uprightness, and (dare I say it?) your passionate love? Nothing, nothing in the world. Ah! nothing ever shall disturb it. Nothing less than a thunderbolt has driven us apart; it is from without, never from within, that misfortunes have come upon us.

VI

Could you only see how I am weeping, my Sophie! Need a poor wretch be ashamed of his tears? Alas! it is the only consolation I have; for, when I weep, my sadness is mingled with a certain pleasure, indefinable but very real. O my dear, what a passion is love, since it can soften such cruel misfortunes! It is to our love we owe

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

the strength to endure our grief, just as it is to love that we owe our transports of delight. But a sense of loss may be as lively as a sense of enjoyment and fulfilment, and far more lasting. I have tasted all the joys of happy love: I now am a prey to all the agony of unhappy love. . . . I weep, and I have not sighs enough for all my ills. What brave man might not succumb, my dearest? What effort would you have me make to support so heavy a burden? Can I light upon a single thought, a single feeling that would not add to its weight? Ordinary men derive courage from not fearing death. Should we say that they are happy? No, no; for they love only themselves and yet live a life outside themselves. They have innumerable desires, innumerable tastes, it is true, but not a single passion. Let them but once place all their hopes on some one object of their love, let them centre all their affection, all their vows and aspirations in her alone, and then let them lose her; they will find that from that time fear will be unknown to them, nothing in the future will have power to terrify them. By reflection and calm reasoning we may place the true value on life; sorrows of the heart must be endured in silence; we cannot weigh them in the balance with our joys and hope to render them more bearable. Sophie, we need far greater courage to keep us from longing for death than from being afraid of that dread visitant. Since Time, whose lagging steps, in truth, make death of life, has consumed all our pleasures, and refuses to restore them, what is time to us? We

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

have no further need of that which grudges us our all. I give up, without a sigh, all that has naught to do with you. I grow sadder every day, my dearest, and, in spite of myself, I shed upon the paper as I write the bitter tears in which my heart is steeped. Two lines, two lines from your hand would heal me; but you are no doubt less in need of listening to the lamentations of your Gabriel than of receiving consolation at his hands. My Sophie, though less passionate, is no less loving; and I know all that she must be suffering in these days of vain expectation and lingering torment; my moaning may be set in a higher key but hers is not less heartfelt for being less pronounced. Who knows but that the knowledge of much that I do not know is not an added torment for you, my dearest wife? At least I still hope; maybe you can no longer. Farewell, my Sophie-Gabriel, whom I love, whom I adore infinitely more than I can say or than she herself can imagine. I send you millions of kisses, to be returned to me without counting. I embrace the little one and beg him to move his tiny limbs lustily, but not too lustily, so as to cause his mother discomfort. I love him well; but let him not presume to think he will ever be my Sophie's rival.

So you refuse absolutely to send me word as to the state of your health? If I knew only that you were keeping well, were not in much pain, got out a great deal, and that the poor little one stirred from time to time, I should be satisfied! My dearest, did I not, in my earlier letters, give you

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

some advice which should be useful to you now, in your present condition? I was once a close observer of a very restless nine months of pregnancy, and it taught me a great deal. Wear your clothes very loose, Sophie, so that the child may have plenty of room to grow; eat only healthy food, so that the child may keep well, and you too; nurse no extravagant fancies, but keep your desires strictly under control, that the child may be neither puny, greedy nor capricious; above all take plenty of exercise, only be careful not to overtire yourself; exercise now will make your delivery easier later on. Alas! how I long to hear that it is all safely over; woman's health depends so much on the way in which she recovers from her confinement. Mind, my Sophie, no imprudence, and, I implore, no listening to the nurse's advice: it is as misleading and dangerous as it is importunate.

VII

M. de Rou . . . has sent a reply to my letter, saying that he will see me to-morrow; I conclude from this that he counts upon seeing my father to-day. When my turnkeys take him a letter from me, he never lets them go without reading it first; I am told this is a very special favour on his part, but I cannot see that I gain anything from it. His courtesy and his thoughtfulness advance my business not a jot; I know only too well that, with men in his position, sincerity is ever sacrificed to politeness: is it not so in society, too? Candour, that

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

noble and generous virtue, which is no longer to be met with anywhere, not even in romances, and which is as far removed from our manners of to-day as farthingales are from our fashions, candour, I say, is now only a mania reserved for a handful of men whom the world is pleased to call fools, imprudent, tactless fools. And yet, my dearest, it is almost invariably the mark of a lofty soul, and for the most part the companion of indomitable courage; but everything makes for its extinction. This out-of-fashion virtue, if I may so express myself, is now nothing if not dangerous. To be sincere is to stand up before the world in a fight with unequal weapons, to struggle bare breasted against a man in iron mail with a dagger in his hand. The empty compliments, the treacherous protestations that run through all our discourse, compel us to distort and exaggerate everything; it is difficult to think with equanimity of the low price that, as a result of the circulation of so much false coin, is set on even the most fervent expressions of friendship, kindness and esteem. Servant of all the world means friend of no one; to offer everything means to give nothing at all. And let us never think that false conventions such as these do not have their influence on the spirit. The man who prostitutes his lips cannot keep pure his heart. Were his conscience tender, so would his mouth be tender. Habit and example encourage us, for most men have very little character; and we are not slow to find, for every principle and every stirring of the conscience, a sheaf of formulas of which it would be hard to discover one that was

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

not perfidy in disguise. It strikes me, my dearest, that I have said all this before, and it cannot be simply an attack of spleen that causes me to inveigh against the world in this way. But after all I may readily be excused if my invective is bitter; I have reason enough for being ill-content with mankind, and have acquired the right to complain, without being accused of misanthropy. . . .

August 24th—Sunday.

There are certain natives of Africa, my dear one, who maintain (and in this they are assuredly no less reasonable than the pious and godly of our own land) that all they ever long for in heaven will be made manifest to them here on earth. That is their idea of happiness to come. It would be an easy matter for me, if I were to adopt such a belief, to render myself as happy on earth as I shall ever hope to be in paradise, for I have but one desire, long for one thing only, and that the quiet possession of my Sophie; therein lies all my happiness. Nor should I be much bother to the god of these worthy Africans, for, while some demand of him magnificent processions, others voluptuous music, others again all manner of strange pleasures, or a continual change of interest and occupation, I ask but one thing; all my desires would be united in a single object. Every faculty of my soul exists for you alone; it is Sophie I wish to see, Sophie I wish to hear, Sophie I wish to love; it is from her alone that I am able to receive pleasure in any of my senses, internal or external; she alone can touch

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

them. If the happiness of another life consists in the complete happiness of the individual, it is my Sophie that is that happiness. How does this theology strike you, my dear love? I think it may be to your taste, and that is enough for me; it is for our use only. Let us leave to the cold-hearted their religion, such as it is. Wrapped up in themselves, they pretend that they are striving upwards towards some imaginary being, to whom they think themselves devoted; in reality they cherish themselves, and themselves only, but they dare not confess it: let them keep it for themselves, this religion which they accommodate so cleverly to the exigencies of their egoism and their wickedness; is it not, in truth, the outcome of their vices? We will follow our own, which nature has inspired and love dictated; we will listen when our hearts call upon us, and we will obey the call, alas! whene'er we can,—we are not of the strongest. But what am I saying? We are not, it is true, master of the least of our movements; but of our feelings and our principles we are undisputed masters. Is it not so, my Sophie? Our bodies may yield to tyranny; but we should be as vile as our tyrants, if we allowed them to enslave our souls. Let us combat our evil fortune, my belovéd, and hope that love will conquer in the end: let us bear up bravely against the cruel trials to which we are submitted; the triumph of victory will be the sweeter, and our love more happy and more tender if that be possible. I have often, my dear one, seen men and women compiling long lists of virtues and amiable qualities and proceed-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

ing to exact them one by one of their friends, their lovers or their mistresses; but very few try to acquire these virtues themselves, or think of setting an example of the goodness they wish to find in others. For my own part, while acknowledging your superiority and confessing to the delight of finding in you those many charming qualities that are wanting in me, I yet can with confidence assert that you will find me second to none in courage, in constancy and in tenderness. I accord you all the other virtues, O my dearest one! and I glory in so doing, for, in that I am your second self, I have a right in a certain sense to attribute them to myself as well; only leave me to bear the palm for tenderness; constancy and courage I will consent to share with you. The true duty of love is to inspire ardour, zeal and courage. Animated by so powerful an ideal, I find your Gabriel surpassing himself in his endeavours; and that is why he may now and again allow himself to figure side by side with his dear Sophie. I have gone from my old cell to a new one, my beloved, and near by I can hear the babbling of that collection of solecisms which they call High Mass; I run no risk of being raised from the contemplation of profane love to that of the love divine, for I confess that I am of the earth.

VIII

August 27th, 1777.

I bled a great deal from the nose last night, my darling, and that woke me from a lovely dream. I

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

was with you at P . . . We were alone; I was moistening with my lips the pupils of your eyes, which you were about to close in death; upon them lay the gentle burden of my kisses. With my love I enveloped you; heart called to heart; heart answered to heart: our breaths mingled and formed a lovely, voluptuous murmur; sighs took the place of words, which we seemed no longer able to utter; I, at that moment, passed away: your spirit was about to follow mine, when . . . Alas! the illusion fled like an airy mist. . . . O my dear! these vivid dreams show me the object of my desires; but I cannot enjoy . . . the pleasure they afford fades away so soon, so soon! Far from assuaging my thirst they only serve to increase it a hundredfold. Ever on fire and never satisfied, I am consumed, nor do my tears help to extinguish the fire that rages within me.—Yesterday, working at my fourth dialogue, I experienced a real pleasure: I worked out a complete proof of the statement that you only rendered me happy because you had to. I intend to submit it, just as it stands, to the eyes of all moralists, however severe, provided only they be no bigots. It is too long to transcribe, but I will tell you in substance how I proved that, as in the case of Madame de Monnier, you were a free agent in rendering me my happiness. It was therein, no doubt, that the difficulty lay, for you had taken no vow of chastity and you were mistress of your person, so long as you were not bound by the ties of conjugal fidelity. Invoking my honour and my generosity, you ask me: (i.) whether I approve

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

of the behaviour of Madame de Mirabeau; (ii.) whether the duties of marriage are mere empty words: I reply to the first question: No, certainly not; I hold it in abhorrence: but it is her perfidy rather than her unfaithfulness that I abhor. Had she chosen any other lover than the man who owed everything to me, who was my friend, whom I regarded as a brother, who betrayed me under cover of my confidence, she would have been less odious to me. Yet this is only my own idea on the matter; my opinion does not in itself constitute a principle. Madame de M.'s unfaithfulness can never be looked upon as other than a very cowardly action, no matter who her accomplice may have been. She married me for love, so she said: I was preferred to five rival claimants for her hand. I had made great sacrifices on her behalf, in order to save her reputation, which was in jeopardy: I had quarrelled with my family and with hers: I braved all the miseries of which I was forewarned by knowledge of my father's odious parsimony. I dealt fairly with her throughout. Most of my debts were contracted on her behalf. I anticipated her wishes and forestalled every whim and fancy. In a word, I always behaved towards her as if I were her lover, although in reality I was not. There was no excuse whatever for her conduct. It was sheer animalism (if I may so express myself), the consequence of a depraved nature, that led her from the path of virtue. None of these circumstances have any bearing on your case. A victim to the avarice of your family, you were sacrificed rather than

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

married to your husband. The difference between the two cases is enormous. But we must beware of considering so important a question in only a few of its details; we must probe it to its depths. Are the duties of marriage mere idle words, you may ask. There can be no doubt as to the reply. Marriage is a civil institution, of unimpeachable respectability: it is a sacred contract, the terms of which form the very foundations of society. It involves the interests of the state as a whole and the happiness of the individual at one and the same time. Even the unmarried partake of the privileges contained in the marriage contract; for they have father and mother, whose happy union is the best guarantee of comfort and prosperity that their children can have. All mankind is therefore concerned in respecting and upholding the inviolability of the conjugal tie; if certain circumstances may afford an excuse for breaking it, none can justify such a step. I am not here summing up the morality of the age, my dearest, but making a plain statement of fact; I am incapable of altering the condition of things, even though I am not strong enough in virtue to conduct myself in accordance with its principles. But, my Sophie, I ask you, are you married? United to a man who might well be your grandfather, you have nothing in common with him but a name and a coat of arms. My friend, is not this an excuse rather than a justification?

I admit the distinction, because it perfectly expresses my own idea.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

I may be less guilty than another, but I shall still be guilty. You imagine that I am such a slave to my passions, that the consummation of marriage is its only joy to me; such a supposition seems to me to be extremely humiliating.

My dearest, I was not aware that platonic love ever entered into our calculations. We are considering the various duties of a woman; and of a married woman; conjugal fidelity is the duty over which we are at this moment pausing. What is marriage? The union of man and woman, to which society gives the guarantee. Why does society give the guarantee? Doubtless because her interests are involved; involved, of course, in the birth of the children proceeding from such a union, over whom society has a right to exercise her control, and whose civil existence must be assured and maintained by society. The social end of marriage is therefore the propagation of the species; and so true is this, that the law is never backward in dissolving a union in which one of the two contracting parties is incapable of fulfilling that end. Conjugal fidelity is a duty only in this sense, although, considered in the light of chastity, it is also a moral virtue. But we have not come to this question yet; we shall consider that a little later on: I only claim here to be examining what was due from you as Madame de Mo.; and I consider you were perfectly free. If I have not proved this to be so, my sweet Sophie, I know nothing whatever about it.

I then go on to consider all the other sides of the question. I ask you whether you do not think that

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

when you made yourself agreeable to Monsieur de M. you did not acquit yourself of the obligations you were under in consideration of the small fraction of his fortune that you shared with him? What claim could he have on your charms, since he was incapable of enjoying them? Vile eunuch and impotent sultan, is that his rôle? I can prove to you that he will reap some very real advantages in return for what is after all no loss to him, for, finding you happier, he will be bound to feel that you are in a state more effectively to combat the contempt and repugnance inspired in you by his superstitious monk's nature, his barren and inflexible spirit, than when you cannot keep from thinking that this man, whom you have so little reason to love or to respect, is the cause of all the unhappiness of the lover whom you cherish in your heart.

Now I will pass on to the examination of true and false modesty, true and false chastity, and so on. I will repeat the whole of the conversation that in the end brought about my happiness; and here I allow my thoughts to dwell on the singularity of the fact that it was in the company of some thirty people that you took the resolution that is usually kept so secret, and that (whispering in your ear, it is true) I gave you reasons for deciding you to take the step. Notice that it was absolutely essential that it should be so; for, when I was alone with you, I could think of nothing but the fulfilment of my desires and you of nothing but defending yourself against them. However eloquent my kisses may have been, they would never have persuaded

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

you. I had been attacking you for months : before capitulating, you wanted a truce ; and the presence of a ring of people as numerous as they were importunate could alone give it you. O my dearest ! from beginning to end our love has been unique. Nowhere could a more affectionate tenderness be found than ours.

The whole of the fourth dialogue is charming, I assure you ! When you send me a good supply of paper, I will write them all out for you to read ; but as each one takes four large sheets, and some even more than that, you will understand that I cannot do so at present without reducing myself to beggary.

Farewell, my dearest dear. I am very tired of waiting for P. ; but I dare not tell you about it for fear of becoming so melancholy as to run the risk of losing my reason. Would that I could lose it on your breast, upon your lips ! Ah ! how often have I not found my joy in that way !—Farewell, dear love, adoréd wife, my universe, my Sophie-Gabriel, delight of my life, consolation of all my ills, the one being whom I adore and ever shall adore.

September 7th—Monday.

To be with those we love, says La Bruyère, is enough. To dream we are speaking to them, or not speaking to them, thinking of them, or thinking of other things, it is all the same. O my dear, how true it is ! how true, too, that the habit of being with our loved ones is so strong in us as to

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

become a necessary part of our existence. Alas! I know well enough, I have reason to know well enough, now that for three months I have languished far from your dear side, that I no longer possess you, and that my happiness is at an end. And yet, every morning, when I awake, I look for you; it seems as though half of me were missing, as indeed it is. Twenty times a day I wonder where you are: you can judge how strong the illusion is and how cruelly I must suffer each time it vanishes! When I lie down in bed, I never fail to leave a place for you; I press myself against the wall and leave a great empty space in my bed. The movement is mechanical; my thoughts involuntary. Ah! how easily we accustom ourselves to happiness! How little we know of it till we have lost it! and I am convinced that we did not know how necessary we were to one another until the thunderbolt dropped that drove us apart. Believe me, dear Sophie, the source of our tears is not yet run dry, our wounds will not heal, we shall not find consolation; we have that in our hearts that will love on for ever, and, in consequence, our tears will for ever flow. Let those who will declare that they were brought out of great tribulation by virtue or the force of the spirit; they derive such consolation from the fact that they were feeble, fickle and inconstant. There are some losses to which we ought never to become indifferent; when we can no longer bring happiness to those we love, then must we bring misery: let us take care always to speak the truth; it is required of us; whatever the

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

world may say to the contrary, truth is in the very nature of true love. Would not Sophie be in despair if she heard that Gabriel was consoled? Well, then, why is Gabriel forbidden to despair? It is true, it is very true, very very true that a lover may love his mistress better than himself, but not better than love itself; he would sacrifice everything, nay, he longs to sacrifice everything in the world to his beloved, excepting only his love. If there exists the human being who thinks otherwise, let him be chary of thinking himself more disinterested than I; he is less in love, that is all. There is one way, and one way only, of sacrificing the love I feel for my divinity, and that is to plunge a dagger in my heart. If I thought that my death was necessary to your happiness, that you could regain it at that cost, I would not hesitate to put an end to my life. I would do so joyfully, feeling that I should be doing you a service; feeling, too, that it would be a very sweet vengeance for one loving as I do to convert an ungrateful mistress into a *very* ungrateful woman. I would do it without a single regret, because it would be clear that you no longer loved me, if you could be happy independently of me. It would not be sacrificing our love, it would be wreaking vengeance on myself, the only way left to me of revenging myself on Sophie. Far from relinquishing your affection, I should be punishing myself for having lost it. The lover who thinks otherwise deceives himself, or wishes to deceive another: he thinks he loves more fondly than he does, or wishes it to be thought

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

so. For my part, who am candid as I am true, this is the profession of my faith. I can sacrifice everything in all the world to you, except your love. I do not know if it signifies a lack of generosity on my part; on the day that you think it does, I am ready to pay the penalty; but I feel that I love in this way and no other, and I do not think it is in human nature to love more than I do: my heart has a supply of energy and activity such as I have never seen in another; and never did lover owe so much to so charming a mistress as Gabriel acknowledges he owes to Sophie. Gratitude is such pure pleasure to me that that alone would suffice to call forth love; but my affection is independent of any other consideration save of itself alone; and I doubt whether I could be cured of my love if you were to pursue me with most bitter hatred, for, since I have come to know you, love has lost no time in becoming my tyrant, placing me completely under his sway. So long as I feasted my eyes on your charms, your freshness, your countenance at once so delicate, gentle and alluring, every word you uttered went straight to my heart. I at one time wished to enjoy a lover's privileges and yet be only friend to you, so greatly did I fear my love; but you led me, in spite of myself, beyond the realms of friendship, until I had no other course but to confess that I could no longer be only friend to you. Too young, too lovely not to appeal to my senses, you were too alluring not to interest my mind as well. Every fresh discovery only served to tighten my bonds. Full of animation and feel-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

ing (although you concealed your weakness for your Gabriel as well as you could), you astonished me, you affected me deeply. The flashes of wit, at once so happy and so natural, that fell from your lips when I least expected them, never failed to enchant me; and, when I thought over them later, I was troubled and perplexed. I became a prey to anxiety, and then again I took heart, saying reassuringly to myself: 'I have had pleasure in so many different *amourettes*! She has had so little experience! How can she possibly gain possession of my heart? She is but a child.' But this child was so charming, and flattered my vanity to such an extent by listening eagerly to all I had to say, apparently thinking much of my conversation and appreciating my lightest words with evident discernment, that her society seemed to me the most delightful thing in the world and soon became an imperative necessity to my happiness. Nothing that fell from my lips was lost on you: even the thousand and one little nothings, that others would have let go by unheeded, were by you greedily gathered in and garnered. We loved each other already, without confessing it. So simple, so naïve, and for that very reason so eloquent, my Sophie seemed to me a masterpiece of sincerity and sensibility: passion alone was wanting and that, love whispered in my ear, my own would inspire. She was *herself*, like to nothing else; but her very peculiarities became her so well that had she been sullen and unsociable I should still have endeavoured to win her, and something told me that I should not have failed.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

In attempting to captivate her, I was captivated myself, a thing I did not expect, and even dreaded. Senseless fool that I was! What a risk I ran! I was substituting pride for love. Forgive, O my Sophie, forgive me; I did not then know the delights of reciprocated love: you alone could let me taste them. But I have surely expiated my crime. Ah! I cherish my chains a thousand times more now than ever I feared them.

IX

It was Ninon Lenclos who said that she thanked God every night from her soul for preserving her body, and prayed to Him every morning to preserve her from the errors of her heart. I say *errors*, because the word is less likely to give offence to my poor mother; but what did Ninon mean by these *follies* of the heart? A series of *faux pas*, indulged in at the expense of her complexion and her constitution? She herself assuredly never approved of her peccadilloes, or rather her prostitution. Never was there woman more charming in friendship, or more despicable in love. My poor mother still has cause for dread, for her blood is as hot as that of a young girl of twenty, and she has good cause to fear the transports of love to which she is subject and the irregularity of her amours, with their resulting indiscretions and imprudences. I have told her that she is too genuine; but, as a fact, she is too thoughtless. In proportion as her passions have grown cooler, so has her temperament grown more amorous, borrow-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

ing, as it were, its ardour from her waning passions. When I told her that the same reproach could be laid to my charge, I only meant in respect of absence of mistrust and lack of suspicion ; I cannot cure myself of this defect, though it plays me sad tricks. Although a sad experience has convinced me that there is very little honesty left in the world, and has given me a very poor opinion of mankind in general, I am quite incapable of applying this principle to any particular person or, if I do, I am always too late. And you are the same, my dearest, just the same ! This is what I mean when I say that we must beware of trusting over-much to the heart ; it is certain that we are duped out of the natural goodness of our hearts, over which we cannot keep too close a watch. It is in this respect alone that the words 'errors of the heart' are applicable to our case. But I have no wish to profane our love, nor, for that matter, any other genuine affection, by giving it such a name. Is it really possible to believe that it was her heart that threw Ninon into the arms of as many as ten men in one day ? What she was pleased to call her heart was really her inflammable nature, rendered still more inflammable by a perverted imagination in which, after each gratification of the senses, she found a severe judge, for she was a woman of upright character and nice distinctions. If her heart had not been depraved, or rather, if she had really had a heart, she would have been able to keep a check on her imagination by allowing it to feed only on a single object of desire. We know well enough, we

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

whose senses are no duller than other people's, that when one is really in love the blood is very hot; but it can only be heated at the fire of passion. True passion is as different from what the world usually calls passion as vice is from virtue. It certainly is not that monkish and unnatural unreasonableness that men call continence. True passion has naught to do with caprice or illusions; it dwells only in the heart of the upright, the fearless, the sincere. No one will ever persuade me that the woman who changes her lovers at the promptings of her appetite has any knowledge of the meaning of virtue and honour. She may be voluptuous and yet chaste; but if she prostitutes herself with several men she can no more be called chaste than a woman who has once broken faith can ever again be called honest; and, as someone has very wisely observed, Nature avenges chastity betrayed by lust, by causing that lust soon to pall. A lascivious woman is soon surfeited, and becomes as unhappy as she is contemptible and a greater stranger to true pleasure in proportion as she pursues it the more keenly. Is it love at all that leads Messalina to her goal? As well might we call animals loving when they are only lecherous. The word love has been applied to the act of generation, which is responsible for the reproduction of the species, because, through a false and very ridiculous modesty, the proper word for this natural operation shocks women whose ears, forsooth, are very likely the only chaste things about them. The result is that the sacred word is smirched and sullied. Our light-o'-loves are delighted, because

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

they can use it as a cloak for their contemptible excesses. We lovers do protest, for we are the best judges of real passion, and although we are no less eager for the delights of the senses, we know that it is from sincerity, pure affection and genuine vivacity that they derive their most precious savour and that it is only to a union of truth and honesty and desire that the word 'love' should really be given.

Never think, my dearest, that the heart can lead one into an error in love; it is, on the contrary, the heart that discerns love, the heart alone that keeps women from degrading intrigue. It is the imagination, when left to run wild, that provokes women of a certain kind to excesses of folly such as those committed by the unfortunate woman whom we are compassionating. It is this that inclines me to believe the story of the poor woman pulling down the unripe fruit, to annoy the nuns whom she so hated. If she had shown a little ingenuity in her malice, we might have laughed at her; but distress and ill-temper weary and irritate us if they do not touch our hearts, and those who were in authority over her would certainly not be touched at her spleen. The celebrated Madame de Mazarin, for example, who ultimately made her escape to England, was placed in Sainte-Marie de la Bastille, and one day, to pass the time, she filled the fountain with ink so that the nuns might smear themselves, in their devotions. It was for the time the joke of Paris. On another occasion she and a certain Madame de Courcelles, who was as mischievous as

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

herself, ran through the dormitory, while the nuns were enjoying their first sleep, calling 'Tally-ho, tally-ho' to a number of little scampering dogs. And once when they wished to wash their feet and the nuns refused to allow it (as if their being in the convent necessitated their following the rules of the convent), the Duchess and her friend filled two great trunks which happened to be in the dormitory with water and stood them on two of the good sisters' beds, soaking them through and through, as the boxes were by no means water-tight. Such tricks as these are very funny, and hurt none except the aged and the over-pious.

But, my lovely one, do not be tempted to put them into practice in the convent you are going to: you are roguish enough to rival Madame de Mazarin; but I warn you that you would not care to imitate her in all she did, so you had better not begin at all. No woman in the world was more beautiful, more charming or more witty: but the mere sight of a man's face was enough to turn her head and she had as many lovers as there were men among her associates. Eunuchs, lackeys, it was all one to her. She had an odious husband, narrow-minded, avaricious, dull-witted; she left him and he took proceedings against her, but it did not prevent her from living a free and happy life in a foreign country. This lovely woman, who had brought her husband twenty millions, or more than the greatest queen ever brought her royal consort, and who had had hopes of espousing the King of England and the Duke of Savoy, could get nothing

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

out of M. de Mazarin after she had left him, and in the end she lived in London on a pension supplied to her by the English government. It was she who one morning, not knowing how to pass the time, stood at the window of the Palais Mazarin with her sister and threw down some hundreds of pounds into the courtyard, for the pleasure of seeing her servants fight for the money. Well, dear love, she died free and happy, this woman who made such a stir in her lifetime, having had four children by her husband. Wherever she went, a troop of lovers went with her. And you, my beloved, you, who are virtue and innocence personified, whose husband is no whit less stupid, jealous, less avaricious than hers, and who has the extra adornment of his seventy years; you, who have never had a single one of the many compensations that fell to the lot of this light woman, you, who only took to flight after the most horrible persecution, inflicted upon you by your own family, while hers protected her as far as possible; you, faithfully, inseparably, joined to a lover to whom you have so nobly sacrificed yourself; you, the model of constancy, kindness, innocence and purity, you, I say, have to spend your days shuddering in the gloom of a loathsome mansion, the home of all that is servile and corrupt! The law courts re-echo with your name; your enemies strive day and night to cover you with infamy, to deprive you of all your rights, even your modest dowry! Your liberty is already taken from you! O Fortune! Are these thy blows? O Providence! Is this thy justice? I was reminded of the career of this

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

woman, so like yours in many respects, in reading a book containing a reference to her ; it has brought me many sad and painful thoughts. You will, I think, find memoirs of her in the works of the Abbé de Saint-Réal ; you should read them. She arranges everything according to her own fancy, and never acknowledges herself to be in the wrong ; but they are not at all badly written, and are full of anecdotes ; and one cannot help being amused, if not interested ; one asks for greater sincerity, and her affectation in wishing to be thought a vestal, while her whole life gives the lie direct to such an idea, is hardly likely to arouse esteem in the minds of her readers. Farewell, my darling : kiss me, my love ; in the eyes of your Gabriel you are the most beautiful of women, as, indeed, the most amiable and the most pure.

September 11th—Thursday.

In that collection of scraps and oddments which contains references to Madame de Mazarin, I came across pleadings both for her and against her. You would hardly believe what a likeness there is between M. de Mazarin and M. de M . . . , in almost everything except age. I will give you one or two anecdotes illustrative of his foolishness and you can draw your own conclusion. Mazarin was devout as a priest, and a great deal of his folly and absurdity is due to his piety. While refusing his wife every penny she asked of him, he endowed schools and subsidised schoolmistresses with enormous sums of money ; he distributed tracts about

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

the villages (an act worthy of M. de Monnier, if only he had wit enough to write them); he wanted to turn the guard-houses of the places where he was in command into monasteries. (M. de M . . ., who never was in command anywhere, used to assemble his servants in prayer, and forbade them any indulgence in the way of mistresses.) One of M. de Mazarin's oldest servants, whom he was in the habit of taking with him in the coach, when on a journey, begged that he might be allowed to travel on horseback; he found the old gentleman's pious and godly conversation too much for him. (I can well believe that M. de Monnier's people would do anything to be free of his yoke.) M. de Mazarin forbade women to milk cows or to sit at a spinning-wheel, on account of the position that had to be adopted and the necessary movements. (This injunction is quite after the style of M. de Monnier.) M. de Mazarin mutilated all the superb statues left him by the Cardinal, because he had a horror of the nude. (Surely that is Monnier over again.) He sold his office of grand-master of artillery, on the plea that war was a crime. (M. de Monnier allowed his tenure of that office to lapse, in order to devote himself more seriously to the things of the world.) M. de Mazarin was very zealous for the conversion of souls. One day he sought audience with the King to tell him that the angel Gabriel had appeared before him, and had charged him to go and bid the King send away Madame de la Vallière. 'He appeared also to me,' replied the Prince, 'and assured me that

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

you were mad.' (You know how keenly M. de Monnier interests himself in the well-being of all the world.)

The likeness grows still more striking. M. de Mazarin, with the devil always present in his imagination, used at night-time to awaken the loveliest woman in Europe, for what purpose? You will never guess. To describe his latest vision! The lights were lit and a search made; Madame de Mazarin never discovered the phantoms; one indeed there was, but he lay in the bed beside her. (You can hardly have forgotten the time when you were roused to listen to the noise made by some harmless little mouse; but this was not the time when you were in Holland.) M. de Mazarin wished to marry his eldest daughter to one of his favourite equerries; his family prevented him from perpetrating such a marked piece of folly, but when the young Duc de Richelieu asked for her hand in marriage, a very singular scruple presented itself to his mind; he remembered that in his youth he had studied with the Duc de Richelieu, the father of the younger Duke, and wondered whether their children might not be too closely related to marry one another. He went so far as to consult the Bishop of Grenoble and of Angers, the Abbé de la Trappe, and many others, on this interesting conscientious objection. (Are not some of M. de M.'s scruples equal to this in point of oddity?) His daughter did not wait for him to settle his doubts but ran away with the Marquis de Richelieu. Her father lost no time in

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

disinheriting her as well as the first child by her marriage. (Not only to-day do the godly and the righteous make the worst of fathers.) Madame de Mazarin left her husband and fled, first, into Italy. The Chevalier de Rohan, her lover, followed her as far as the first stage and then left one of his gentlemen to accompany her on her journey. Immediately M. de Mazarin lodged a complaint and issued a writ against him and even against the Duc de Nevers, Madame de Mazarin's brother. (I cannot help thinking that M. de Monnier had this conduct in his mind when he instituted proceedings against his unfortunate victims.) M. de Mazarin had the King waked from his sleep at three o'clock in the morning to beg him to send someone after his wife. 'You would do better,' said the King, 'to petition for orders on the governors of my coasts to stop her from returning to France.' (M. de M. would have been fortunate, and we too, if someone could have been found to offer him such sound advice.) M. de Mazarin sent someone to follow the route his wife had taken (when it became known) and find out everything that he possibly could about her conduct. (The commission entrusted to Sage was slightly more foolish and a trifle more indecent than this.) Madame de Mazarin wrote, when on her travels, to her love; her husband intercepted the letter and showed it to the King, afterwards presenting it to parliament. 'In this way,' said M. de Bussy, '*n'étant pas cocu de chronique*' (because the letter was not public property) '*au moins le sera-t-il de registre.*' (M. de Monnier, having de-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

posited the breeches of his daughter's lover at the registrar's office, then proceeded to do the same with the letters of his wife's lover—the latter took more care of his breeches; he had the double satisfaction of being '*cocu de chronique et de registre*' and passing for the biggest fool and greatest scoundrel in France.) And after all, M. de Mazarin need not have troubled so much about a proof of his wife's unfaithfulness; she supplied him with so many of her own free will; from the third day, for all we know even from the first, the Chevalier de Rohan had to give place to Courbeville, one of the gentlemen of his suite. (As for M. de M., he had only to give the word to the priests, his friends and his senseless family, and they would have established his claims to rank as a wronged and injured husband far more readily than lawyers and magistrates.) Madame de Mazarin was fortunate in this respect, that the influence of her family was sufficiently great to hush up the affair. (Yours has made a public scandal and embittered mine against me.) Madame de Mazarin's affair came to an end a few years later in the forfeiture of her dowry and her conjugal rights. (I feel convinced that if M. de Monnier were approached with a view to a settlement he would reply in terms precisely similar to those employed by M. de Mazarin, saying that he would think first before he entered into any negotiations or listened to any proposal whatever that his wife might choose to make; he intended to set the law upon her track and have his full revenge.) In every land and in

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

every age, there is little to choose between the wicked, the pious and the foolish.

As you may perhaps be wondering why M. de Mazarin forbade women to milk cows or use a spinning-wheel, I will tell you; it was on account of the movements involved, in the one case with the fingers, in the other with the feet, which might give rise to nasty thoughts. In the rules drawn up by him for the management of his estates, he exacts purity and chastity from the shepherdesses who tend his sheep, and even greater purity, if possible, from the goat-herds who mind his goats. He makes it a rule that those who drive the cattle should cast their eyes upon the ground when they see the bull draw near his cow. None of this is any more foolish than some of the anecdotes you have told me. I thought you would be amused at the parallel, and I am so little in a position to write in a lively vein to my love, that I thought it would be a pity to neglect the opportunity when it presented itself. Alas! the smile is soon hidden, and a gloom comes over my countenance when I think of the poor skeleton to which you have been united. What would you not endure to be free of it! O my dearest, is the happiness of our lives to be contained in one short year? Must we perish because for nine months fortune smiled upon us? What a fate! And how each day aggravates it, dragging along so slowly. . . . O death, hasten to our aid, if our misery is to know no respite! O love, if we are destined to see each other again, hasten thou; every minute thou delayest, thrusts

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

us still deeper into the depths of despair, and our tears consume a life which should be consecrated to thee.

P. is not coming, then, my dearest? We have started another month; soon we shall be half way through. I have no news of you, know nothing of your health or your affairs. . . . Ah! I am wretched indeed! I have not seen F. again; he can surely not have been to Paris; I dread asking: it is so easy to harbour suspicions, and they would be so dangerous in our case! Belovéd! Take pity upon me; send P. to me: he need not wait for a pretext; let him boldly ask to see me. I was promised a visit from him, as a consolation; it had nothing to do with business. If he is meaning to wait until I have got my effects back from Holland, he will have to wait for ever. Alas! I cannot stand the strain much longer; I have still a little patience left, but very little. For forty-two days I have had no word from you; multiply forty-two by the number of minutes in a day, and you will obtain the sum of my miseries. Farewell, my best belovéd, my dearest dear, my bride, my own darling! I am very miserable; it will take much to console me, a long long letter full of tenderest love, assuring me that you are well and will never cease to love me. Send me news of the little one. Alas! we make no arrangements for his future; I am never for one moment free from anxiety. I send you a thousand kisses.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

X

September 12th, 1777.

Brave Givori, affectionate d'Humières, who made away with themselves rather than suffer a breach of trust, how happy do they seem to me! So truly did they love, that life was nothing to them after their betrayal. I die of grief, and yet the most charming of women adores me! How precious my life would be, were I only free! And yet I loath my life, and I am but seven and twenty! In spite of my distinguished parentage, a moderate fortune, some few talents and a charming mistress, who alone eclipses all other advantages as the bright morning star doth eclipse a feeble lamp, yet am I the most unfortunate of men. There is no anxiety that I am not made to suffer, no misfortune but it assails me; and my dearest shares them all with me. Pitiless tyrants, pouring out the vials of their wrath upon us, reduce us to misery during their lifetime, and, in fine Christian spirit, manage to assure themselves that after their death we shall be no less miserable. We struggle vainly for a foothold in a bottomless pit; even the bitter consolation of knowing the extent of our suffering is withheld. Uncertainty, the cruellest of all torments, is our portion. Hopes for the present we have none at all; hopes for the future are too dim, they escape us; the most terrible of all ills for us, since our existence is fraught with such bitter pain, would

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

be life itself, were it not for our love, which is the product of our life; and this love, with all its heart-rending anguish, is yet the dearest of all our possessions. The life of one who is indifferent to love is a living death; life, as life, in itself is a hateful thing. So let us love each other still, beloved! May love be our recompense, our reward. If I no longer loved, what difference would there be between this awful solitude and the tomb? Would not death be a thousand times preferable to the life I am leading? In the grave I should feel nothing; now I suffer untold pain. No other bond binds me to the world, save my love for you. I have neither friends nor relations: the latter have proved traitors, the former I mostly hate, to the rest I am indifferent. The most natural tie of all, that of family affection, does not exist for me. Those who are brought up in the bosom of their family, resembling one another in sentiment, communicating to one another their interests, their secrets and their hopes, have a strong natural bond of affection. But now that the ties of blood are loosened by hatred or cold indifference, thoughtlessness or tyranny, and the names of brother and sister have no longer any but a civil meaning for me, what duties does my mother's union impose upon me? Do I owe blind unquestioning devotion to my father, because, forsooth, in a passionate moment he generated the seed whence I sprang? He has, since that time, become one of my bitterest enemies. If we are careful not to be deceived by long words, and refuse to take on trust the grandiloquent maxims that dazzle our youthful

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

intelligences, we soon find it no difficult matter to estimate parental and filial duties at their proper value. Those who preach them to us are undoubtedly interested in our practice of the lessons they endeavour to impart. They speak to us unceasingly of our duty to our parents, never of our rights as children: they cannot deceive us long, however, when once we begin to reflect; the noodles who listen dutifully to what they teach are hypocrites. The only true bonds that bind us poor mortals together are those of kindness, charity and love. I owe my Sophie everything, because she has sacrificed everything for me: I cherish her, because she has brought me happiness, and without her I know none. But I do not, I cannot, indeed, I ought not to love those who have done me cruel wrong, or those who now stand idly by when they might serve me. I would ask them this, these preachers of filial piety: if by a chance discovery of circumstances previously unknown (I speak of that which is not by any means beyond the bounds of possibility) it came to be proved that I was the son of Monsieur and Madame de R., the fruit of their chaste union, should I owe them my faithful allegiance? Would it be possible for me to exchange my just resentment of their behaviour for feelings of affection and filial devotion? If the answer be yes, I ask further of what nature is that obligation which is handed down from father to son just as the family name is transmitted. If, from the name of Ruffei, which has six letters, of which four are to be found in my own, two were to

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

be taken away to make room for the remaining four that compose the name Mirabeau, am I then to owe all, my obedience, my affections, my very life to those who really deserve nothing of me but hatred and contempt? A strange code indeed! Do you think there exist reasonable beings who would adopt it? In this matter there is only one right conclusion to be drawn, and that is that the kindness of parents towards their children is the only thing that demands affection and gratitude in return. O my beloved, I owe to none but thee! I say it to myself every day: my whole life is consecrated to thee. Even if I never join you again, all my vows, all my feelings, all my thoughts are yours; and when my eyes are closed in death, my one desire will be to fix them on your dear face. My passion was nurtured among thorns, but it was happiness that put it to the test. In the bosom of happiness my love for you did not cool; in the midst of adversity it knew no change. Blindly devoted to you I have never been; I have seen you as you are; and, in proportion as your heart and mind developed, I grew to love you better. My jealousy, which every spark of suspicion kindled into flame, has never been guided by any other influence save that of love. I might be driven to extremities, but enlightenment was bound to follow, and a reconciliation which only served to add new strength to my original feelings. Your friend is incapable of that jealousy, so gloomy, so contemptible and so odious, that is the product, the foster-child of pride: in short, my love is not

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

founded on caprice. Will the time ever come when another woman shall seduce my imagination and steal my heart from its allegiance? Surely not. In you I have found all that I have ever desired, all that I have ever sought in woman. I had renounced the hope of ever realising the dream of my life, when, behold, you came! What remains for me, but to enjoy my happiness? Alas! how far off that happiness now seems.

September 13th—Saturday.

I saw Fontellian to-day. The turnkey left us for two precious minutes, to go and fetch some water. Fontellian said to me: 'I have not been able to get to Paris; there is an invalid here in whom the Duc d'Orléans is much interested, and whom I cannot leave. (He means Mademoiselle Desaleu, the aunt of that Madame de Montesson who succeeded in getting the Duke to marry her.) But, alive or dead, I will find P., I promise you. Your turnkey saw you hand me a note the other day. I denied it, but he laughed in my face and did not believe me. You must be more careful in future; it is, for both of us, an unpardonable crime.'

He then fled like lightning, because M. de R. was expected; but he did not come, after all. Behold me a prey to more uncertainty, at one time daring to hope, at another obsessed with the most awful fears! How weary I am of it all; never before have I felt so weak or so disheartened. My health has been very bad again for several days, and I am still unable to sleep, indeed, I can hardly say that

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

I have ever had any respite from insomnia. My chest is weak and I suffer intolerably from pains in the head; my eye, too, is beginning to swell again. In short, everything combines to make my life a burden; but, indeed, loss of health is but a very small part of my miserable afflictions. Alas, if only I could feel sure of getting your letters, and know that you loved me still, in spite of all, I should not worry about anything else. If I do not hear, what is to become of me? I am condemned to a lingering death, which no power on earth can avert. The sooner I die the better, if I am much longer to be kept in my present state of perplexity, for death would relieve me from tyranny, from grief and bitter longing; one refuge remains, and one only, where not even the thunderbolts of my enemies can reach me, and from which I can never be torn. Why not seek it and be at peace? I want to know that your love will never change, that you will remain faithful after all have abandoned me: that you cannot assure me of this increases my torture a hundredfold. My chains are not likely to feel lighter because those you drag are as heavy. If only I were assured of your love, nothing else would matter; I could dwell for ever on the delight of that knowledge. But, alas! to live on, loved by Sophie it may be, but without communication with her, without knowing in the least even whether she be still alive, is more than I can bear. Unless you come to my aid, I shall succumb. Vexed by harassing thoughts, a prey, day and night, to vain imaginings, again and again I

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

hear in the silence a voice that cries: 'She is lost to you; here is your last resting-place; you will not see her more.' And then again love conjures up a charming image, and consoles me and bids me take heart afresh. I yield to the hallucination, its sweetness compels me, but only for an instant; and thus, now despairing and now confident, now hopeful and now in direst fear, I am indeed the most wretched and tormented of men.

XI

September 14th, 1777.

I went to mass to-day, feeling very melancholy; I hoped to see M. de R . . . as he left the church. He was there, but he spoke to no one, so they tell me: he inquired about the state of my health very kindly! I may tell you, whom it really interests to know, that I have not slept and that I am on the whole not at all well. My low spirits increase the general depression and my thoughts are a torment in themselves. Alas! I said to myself this morning, as I listened to the droning service, if only I could share the faith of the orthodox, I should not hesitate to urge Sophie to follow my example and put an end to her life; our separation would then be over. We should meet in a happy land where our hearts would be for ever united, and where death, persecution, absence, misfortune would never more disturb our happiness. For, assuredly, the same fate would be reserved for us; whether we were

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

damned, or whether we entered heaven, we should be together: and I cannot imagine even a hell where I should be unhappy with my beloved. But, my dearest, we are not fortunate enough to enjoy illusions of this nature; we believe that when we perish, we perish entirely, soul and body together; and surely it is this belief that makes us cling to life, for the fear of losing everything, our love included, is the only thing that gives a value to our existence here on earth. O best beloved, to those who do not love, how mad must we appear, with our vows of love everlasting! The women who are compounded of littleness, folly and perfidy, of everything, in fact, that engenders that love of outrivalling their sisters which is their first and perhaps their only passion, how they must pity you! Those who have as many desires as they have men among their friends, and as many lovers as they have desires, would simply say, as M. Ruffei did, that you are mad and ought to take a course of waters. And the men, the frivolous and the vain, the violent and the untrue, the insolent and the inconstant, whose vanity is their only guide, and who, in consequence, are always more or less ungrateful and dissatisfied, because they have so false an estimate of their deserts or because they think it essential to a glorious career to sully it with countless infidelities, what do you think they say of me? Those like M. de R . . . , whose tastes are solely for the coarsest and basest of pleasures, and, because they have neither heart nor soul, are never likely to be susceptible to a love that is both tender

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

and pure, will be kind enough to deny the existence of feelings in me that to them are unknown and hence impossible; and, as coolly as you like, they will say that I have ruined my future for the sake of courting notoriety; that your love is only a whirl of the senses, a weakness of the heart and obstinacy on the part of the mind; that I have corrupted you; that, in a critical moment, you sacrificed your virginity and that I persuaded you into thinking that after that there was nothing about you that was not mine; that, in your blindness, you let yourself be led into committing the most foolish of errors; that you ought not to be considered as having ever been mistress of yourself; that the ascendancy of my mind and the impetus given to it by your senses are responsible for everything; in short, they will do you the honour of justifying your conduct in their eagerness to prove me a criminal, a proud (insolent, even, they may say), self-centred rogue, without a vestige of honour, discretion or generosity; and will assert that my vices are balanced by an insinuating disposition, adroit behaviour, charming manners and cunning finesse.

I take a real pleasure in setting down these absurdities, atrocious as they may seem, because I almost seem to hear these men speaking and I want to leave you a model of their elegant conversation, for you to judge if it be not a true copy of the original. It is by such as these, my dearest, that I shall be judged, and we shall hear them say: What a dangerous man! What a wicked man!

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

What a pity that such talent should be employed for such unworthy ends! When, ah, when shall I become fool enough to be accounted honest? Or rather, when will men cease to be such fools as to judge me by my worst enemies; or to believe that a man whom they admit to be of no mean intelligence has committed such grave errors with no other motive save that of losing the woman for whose sake he has ruined his whole life? 'For the sake of courting notoriety. . . .' And, forsooth, what good has notoriety been to me? Was I confronted with the necessity of conveying a wife into a strange land in order that I might gain the reputation of having one? Do they not know that a flunkey can find a wife wherever he cares to look for one? If it was only a wife that I wanted, should I have had any difficulty in finding one? Would my condition be so desperate, my existence so contemptible that I should have nothing more to lose, if it were not that I wished to preserve from the persecutors whom I had attracted round her an adored and noble-hearted mistress, whose happiness was everything to me? Did I appropriate great riches, in order to live the life of an Epicurus in a foreign land? The life I led in Holland was surely only desirable in that it was blessed by our love. Let them attribute their vile motives to those odious men who, in order to escape the consequences of sin, or poverty or weariness of life, wander over the world, a prey to their own caprices and those of fickle dame Fortune; carrying poor unfortunate women in their train, who, in return for their

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

credulous complaisance, are in the end invariably abandoned by the monsters who have seduced them and robbed them of all they possessed. But what have I done to deserve such calumnies as they heap upon me? Have I not shared my mistress's fate? I have only done my duty, I know, and God forbid that I should be so contemptible as to expect to be praised for it, but at least, I have a right to expect not to be insulted. There are so many who fail to do what they ought! If they really want to ruin me, let them at least think of some charge with at anyrate a semblance of likelihood about it, and not say that it is for love of notoriety that I have laid myself open to the necessity of earning my own livelihood, and perhaps succeeded in getting myself imprisoned for the rest of my days. You will find, too, that I let myself be taken, wishing to be thought eccentric, and that I came to Vincennes without attempting to effect an escape. I wish that they would be so kind as to tell me wherein I have shown myself so shrewd and cunning, I, whom the whole world has hoodwinked, I whose vaunted intelligence has never once preserved me from the snares and pitfalls of the coarsest fools that nature ever fashioned. Dear God! if to prove oneself pitifully stupid were all that were needed to establish a claim to true Christian humility, I should be saved indeed, in spite of my love for a woman! As for my pride, it is so great that you have yourself seen me encourage the peasants to forget what is due to me by my extreme affability towards them. Moreover, before charging a man

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

with being proud, let them define what they mean by pride. There are certain circumstances in which it is impossible for a man of honour not to be proud. Pride is often confounded with arrogance; it is the mistake of the small and the base. The touchstone of arrogance is adversity; in adversity the arrogant become despicable, while the proud man squares his shoulders and stands ready to bear the brunt. As for the aspersions on my honour, I pass them by. A rogue is always talking of his honesty, a coward of his bravery and a secretary of state of his nobility. The false modesty that leads us to deny the good qualities our friends would attribute to us is stupidity of another kind, no less common. 'Sir, you are so kind!' 'Not at all, sir, not at all.' 'Do you mean that you are unkind?' There are certain virtues, of which honour is one, of which one ought neither to boast nor to be ashamed. Shall I talk about my kindness? No; for my conduct should prove me kind, without my saying so. Shall I deny that I am kind? And confess myself a monster! And in the same way, what am I to reply to a man who says, behind my back, that I have no honour? Nothing, absolutely nothing. When men of R.'s stamp inveigh against my indiscretion, they do not err. I confess that I am very indiscreet in the letters I write to you; for, if they, both yours and mine, beloved, were intercepted, our indiscretions would become public property. I also admit that our flight was not particularly discreet, especially as a law-suit followed upon it. If I wished to cavil, I might

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

ask who were most lacking in honour, the lovers who wrote the letters or those who opened and read them; and who were most indiscreet, the lovers who took to flight or those who made a criminal prosecution out of the escapade? But I have no desire to argue about trifles, and I am only too ready to own myself in the wrong. But when it comes to charging me with being self-centred and selfish, I must confess I can hardly restrain my temper. . . . I selfish! I, who all my life long have sacrificed myself for others, who, again and again, have allowed others to take advantage of me! And it is men whose only passion is greed, vile, grasping greed, who dare accuse me! The odious calumniators would spurn you if you had the audacity to offer them a louis, as you would a servant; but with a pile of such coins you would never fail to move them; they would commit any atrocity, any meanness to obtain it. The more you add to the pile the more thoroughly do you wipe out the insult. It is this fact, so humiliating but so true, that has made me a prodigal with my money. I learnt too late that this yellow dross that I despised so royally was the spring of all our pleasure, and that poverty exposes us to all kinds of humiliation, indignity and misfortune. Before I realised this, the habit of indifference to money had already been formed: and in spite of the fact that I have endeavoured to keep a very strict watch on myself, I have often surprised myself with a neglect of my own interests which is unpardonable in view of all I have gone through, especially as it is not I alone who suffer

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

from the fact that I am a poor man. But what is the use of chafing in my harness; there is no need as far as you are concerned for me to refute the foolish arguments of your respected family; if an angel from heaven were to try and convert them, they would not listen. Farewell, my best beloved. My eyes are still very bad and the north wind affects my chest; but my heart, though very sick, abates nothing of its vigour and energy.

September 15th—Monday.

As long as it shall please the wind to blow from the North, and P. to fail to put in an appearance, I shall not get a wink of sleep; I am, indeed, thoroughly out of sorts. The effects of my disorder are bound to show in my letters: they will afflict my Sophie, revealing to her the extent of her Gabriel's suffering. Believe me, my dearest, I implore you, when I tell you that I strive my utmost to speak as little as possible of the evils of my life; but I constantly find myself doing so, in spite of all my care. Alas! how could it be otherwise? Is not the whole of my existence one of grief and pain? Of what can I discourse, if it be not of my love; how speak, but to lament of my woes? You would only think me a cold-hearted fool if I were, for the sake of variation, to play the philosopher or the wit. And how could I do it, where could I find the strength? I cannot at present put two ideas together, cannot even grasp other people's ideas; and, after perusing a book the whole day through, I cannot remember a word of what I have read.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

XII

September 19th, 1777.

The frail tenement of my happiness has crumbled to the ground, beloved. I have not even seen M. de R., and to-day he is off again. Thus I have spent twenty-four hours in a state of mingled perplexity, fear, and longing, and am now even more unhappy than before. I ought soon to be cured of ever having hopes about anything! Strange that after so many disappointments, so many false hopes, I can still be taken in! I am weeping bitterly; my tears flow from a source that will never be dried up, and will flow on until the day that ends my miseries. . . . How cruel to announce himself beforehand and then fail to put in an appearance. Cannot he see that the least thing puts me in a turmoil? Alas, my dearest, for professions not fulfilled! They wither the heart, shrivel it up to nothing! How true it is that habit can make us indifferent to the suffering of others, especially when we are not ourselves unhappy. The very thought of misery is irksome to those who, though they may be susceptible to pity of a more or less mechanical nature, love themselves too well to run the risk of disturbing their peace of mind by uncomfortable reflection. But one would think that to the wretched who are dependent upon us we owe a little consideration. O Sophie, Sophie, as one by one my illusions vanish, how doubly precious your

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

letters become! How anxious I am! What pains I suffer! So many things may be taking place, and I hear nothing! What have the R.'s done? What have they written, arranged, planned? Where are you? What are you doing? Can you endure your life amid that crowd of women? Are you still properly looked after? By the description of your visit you have made me a prey to a hundred and one fresh anxieties. I shudder whenever I think of the odious company surrounding you! Alas, your Gabriel has none save mournful thoughts, hopeless and despairing thoughts, that rend his spirit night and day. And the state of your health, the state of your health, alas, that I am completely ignorant of it! The time grows nearer and nearer, when you will be delivered; to think of your enduring the pangs of labour in such a den! How cruel a preparation our miseries and griefs have made! . . . Ah! Sophie, the loving sympathy that consoles and comforts in hours of pain is not for you. Your Gabriel, whose heart o'erflows with sympathy and tenderness, is many leagues away. It is for him that you will suffer; it is he who is responsible for the dreadful circumstances that aggravate your torments. . . . O best beloved! To know that one's love is suffering and be powerless to relieve her, or at least to comfort her, and, in addition, to feel responsible for the misfortunes, is the most awful position that the human mind can conceive, and in that position is your Gabriel. . . . Alas! My sighs, my sobs, my cries of pain, you never hear them! . . . Two fond lovers, who were kept apart, once suc-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

ceeded in communing one with the other by contemplating the moon at a certain hour every night: as they gazed they consoled themselves by the thought that each at the same moment was looking upon the same object. Alas! I have not even this means of guiding my grief into another channel, for I never see it, this gentle moon that lovers know so well: yet you must know that every moment of the day and night your lover's mind is filled with thoughts of you; no need for you to fix a certain hour. O my belovéd Sophie! Think of the horror of my fate; it is not possible to overestimate my afflictions! But it were better still, if possible, not to think of them at all. There are moments when I am almost capable of wishing you would give me up. Could I but believe that if you forgot me, happiness would be restored to you, I would immolate myself at once on the altar of your peace of mind; but I know that without her lover there is no happiness for Sophie. Dear love! His life or death, supreme content or utter misery depend upon your behaviour towards him, and upon nothing else; but he would have you in all things obey the promptings of your heart alone.

Yes, yes, some day we shall find a shelter, even if we have to inhabit the desert, or tend the flocks in some unknown mountain fastness, or flee to the uttermost ends of the earth, somewhere where we can be free to enjoy our love. O my dearest, we are younger than our enemies, and quite as persevering in our love and our desires as they can possibly be in their hatred and tyranny. So long

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

as they do not keep me shut up for the rest of my life, and my frail body can withstand the strain of so prolonged a confinement, we need not despair of ever being happy again, for I can see the end of the course I am pursuing, but, alas, it is a long way off! After all, I should not be the first of my race to perish in this place. The Maréchal d'Ornano, whose daughter married my great-great-grandfather, died here. I was for a long time under the impression that he died in the Bastille, but I read yesterday, in the history of Louis XIII., that it was here. One d'Hélicourt was the governor at that time, and he treated him with the utmost severity. The Maréchal was at first fed from the King's table, but afterwards orders were given for M. d'Hélicourt's people to provide him with food. When this came to the ears of the Maréchal, he utterly refused to touch any of the dishes set before him, for he feared poison. D'Hélicourt said to him: 'So you are afraid I want to poison you! What an idea! Why! I would not take the trouble! If the King were to order me to thrust a dagger through your heart, I would obey him instantly.' The poor Maréchal, a few months after this, heard the firing of guns and other signs of a general rejoicing among the people, and asked his surly keeper what it meant. The latter said to him: 'It is the day of the marriage of the Duc d'Orléans and Mademoiselle de Montpensier.' (You will remember that Maréchal d'Ornano had been tutor to the Duc d'Orléans, the King's brother, and had always opposed the marriage, which was one of the reasons of his

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

being kept a prisoner.) 'God be praised!' said he, 'you will not have me on your hands much longer.'

'Why not?' asked d'Hélicourt.

'Because,' replied d'Ornano, 'Monsieur would have secured the promise that I should be set at liberty before he consented to this marriage.'

'You may disabuse yourself of that idea at once,' rejoined the tyrant's satellite, 'for he has married unconditionally, and no one troubles any further about you except to institute proceedings, and that will shortly be done.'

D'Ornano fell ill of despair soon after this, and died at the age of forty-six. It is not only to-day that we have to complain of despotism. Yet d'Ornano's son-in-law is the only one of us who ever received anything from the crown, for it was in his day that Mirabeau was created into a marquisate.

I have no more paper, my Sophie.

XIII

October 8th, 1777.

I hoped to see M. de R. to-day, or at least to learn through Berard if M. Lenoir's day is fixed; but M. de R. has been gone since morning. Consequently I have nothing new to tell you. I have not been for a walk, because I was only able to get to sleep for one hour this morning, nor to mass, because that bores me, as you can easily believe. Luckily M. de R. is not a pious man, although it is

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

a rule here that the walk must always follow mass ; that is to say, a prisoner only obtains permission to go for a walk if he has religiously attended mass, doubtless that he may first thank God for so gracious a boon. I should never quarrel with anyone for so slight a cause. I can understand how a man who has joined one sect would be unwilling to confine himself to the observances of another ; but the man who has no belief need not scruple to do anything for the sake of peace, especially if he is only asked to go through a series of ritualistic mummeries which do no one either harm or good. These, according to Madame de R., are sacrilegious principles ; but her strictures do not frighten either of us ; I hereby give notice that he who succeeds in winning us for the 'cause' will be the most remarkable converter of souls of the century ! I know very well that if I were so weak as to be in need of some religious belief, our own theological system would be the last I should choose. Given the necessity for a religion for the people, by no means a rational hypothesis to my mind, the worship of a multiplicity of gods, with dogmas in proportion, would seem to me by far the best calculated to secure the peace of the human race. Pagan mythology banished intolerance as well as superstition, for the very number of its gods and the variety of its rites allowed all manner of cults to find a place in the religious system. I cannot see that the passions which the pagans attributed to their heavenly beings were very different from the passions that they felt themselves. After all, the

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

pagans only did what men will always do, attributed their affections, their feelings, their desires, their faculties to the celestial host. The reason of this error is a very simple one; that it is impossible for mankind to form any idea of that which is absolutely unlike anything it has ever known. But the theological systems of the ancients were by their very nature favourable to tolerance: polytheism, or the plurality of gods, absurd as it is in the eyes of the philosopher, is really no more absurd than any other religious system, if we consider it in all its bearings. It had at least this advantage, that it led to sociability among its adherents, whereas we, with our metaphysics, our subtleties, and our disputations, have spread intolerance and superstition throughout the world. If we go to the root of the matter we are bound to admit that the worship of a single god will never be the true religion of any nation. Such a dogma will never reach the hearts of the people; and, in every land and every country in the world, the common people will make for themselves one god or many, after a pattern of their own or that of the priests, gentlemen who are always interested in making the simple beliefs of mankind more complicated. Purely speculative opinions would not suit their purpose at all. What it comes to is this, that polytheism has been exchanged for polytheism, but our polytheism is stern, unsociable, turbulent, while that of the ancients was infinitely more politic. In ancient times there were in reality always two religions existing side by side, the religion of the philosophers

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

and the religion of the people. In the Christian religion we are all considered as of one family. The cause of all the awful misery that the world has had to suffer on account of the Church is that the priests insist that they have authority to put an end to all disputation, authority to determine our conclusions. When the state also declares itself to be in favour of a certain religious opinion, intolerance of other opinions is the only possible result. Yet a multiplicity of religious sects is far from being an evil to a nation. Everyone has the right to follow his own judgment in the matter of doctrine, provided his conduct is in other ways absolutely subservient to the laws that owe their protection to all. No one sect would prevail above the rest provided the magistrate forbore to concern himself with religious discussion, and steadily opposed his authority to persecution, proselytism, rioting, or any action that might be likely to disturb society. Metaphysics is not the magistrate's business. Look at Holland, where so little that is good is to be found; at anyrate it is a model country for tolerance and liberty of thought. That Holland is a peaceful country, where fanaticism is far less rife than elsewhere, is to be accounted for by the fact that many sects are to be found among the Dutch, the one rivalling the other in the observance of religious duties. The magistrate takes care always to be neutral, confining himself only to preserving for society a state of untroubled peace. I know the great argument of the bigoted. It is absurd, say they, to set up the transitory, temporal interests

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

of society over against those of our salvation and the life eternal. To this there is but one reply (to question the 'life eternal' would lead to endless controversy, involving all other controversies that have ever raged); but one reply, I say, and that is that a civil magistrate exists only for the purpose of safeguarding our temporal interests; and, in this capacity, he can neither torment men in order to win for them a chance of eternal happiness with which he has nothing whatever to do, nor allow others, with a similar object in view, to make a raid on their liberty and present peace, which it is his duty to protect. We must leave the charge of His glory and the establishment of His holy laws to the Lord of all. The famous Lord Peterborough once said, in reference to a proposed bill to put down atheism, that he would submit to a king chosen by parliament, but not to a god, nor a religion; and that if parliament began to meddle with religion, he would go over to Rome and use his influence to get himself nominated Cardinal, inasmuch as, in dealing with religious matters, he would prefer to be seated in conclave, rather than in a House of Lords. This seems to me as reasonable as it is neatly put. . . . But here am I writing a dissertation on tolerance, without either the strength or the inclination to do so. I will conclude, O best beloved. You know how my pen runs away with me when I write to you; I feel that everything that comes from me gives you pleasure to read, and that you like to hold the same opinions and feel the same emotions as I do.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

October 16th—Monday.

O my dearest and best, how long and cruel does waiting seem, when it is the heart that hopes, the heart that suffers! How trifling are the other misfortunes that fall upon humanity compared with those that affect the soul and the passions! How truly wretched is an unhappy lover! Death, the unfailing refuge from all our ills, so dear to a man of courage, when he can find no solace in his misery, is for the lover a very formidable expedient. While despair urges him on, love holds him back. . . . The image of his mistress renders life precious, though it be steeped in bitterness; he longs for light, where another in his place would sue for darkness. . . . These thoughts, which have come to me so often since I have been shut up within these hateful walls, are strong in me this morning; they have arisen out of an anecdote which I have just been reading, so strange that I think it worth repeating. It proves incontestably that no passion is to be compared with love, inasmuch as one's liking for one's children and one's wife is, in certain misfortunes, powerless to overcome one's longing for death. Richard Smith, a bookbinder, was retained for debt in London. He decided to put an end to his life and persuaded his wife to follow his example, after she had first put to death their little child. The unfortunate couple were found in the room where they slept, hanging from a rope a little distance apart; in another room the child was found dead in her cradle. They left two papers enclosed in a very short letter addressed to the mistress of the

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

house, asking her to be kind enough to look after their dog and their cat. They also left a small sum of money to pay for the delivery of the papers into the hands of the persons to whom they were addressed. In one of these the husband thanked the recipient for the marks of kindness shown to him, and complained of the shabby treatment he had received from certain others of his acquaintance. The other paper, signed by husband and wife, contained their reasons for their cruel behaviour towards themselves and their little child. The letter was written in a cheerful strain, and bore evidence of being the outcome of tranquil deliberation. They declared that they were retiring from the misery that had come to them as the result of a series of misfortunes, took their neighbours to witness that they had always been industrious and devoted to labour, justified the murder of their little daughter by saying that it was less cruel than leaving her without a friend in the world. They showed their faith and confidence in a God who could have no pleasure in the misery of his creatures and resigned their lives into his hands without remorse and without fear. They had always been a sober and industrious couple, strictly honest, and remarkable for the love they bore to each other. But neither the bond of conjugal affection, nor the love for their child, could make life bearable, as long as they had to keep up a perpetual struggle against want and necessity. . . . Dear love, I am certainly a thousand times unhappier than they were, and my life is infinitely more sad,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

yet I cannot think without a shudder of cutting the slender thread of my existence; I shall cling to life with unabated energy so long as I have any hope, however faint, of one day leaving this living tomb and feeling your arms around me once again. My ideas of suicide are similar to those of the unfortunate English couple; I think it a just and natural act when the sum of the ills outweighs the blessings of life. I assuredly do not lack courage, nor is much needed to deprive oneself of a life which one holds in horror. I have a son; but I have never thought of him since I consecrated my life to you; less than ever do I think of him now that you bear the fruit of our love in your bosom. I have a mother whom I love dearly; but not for one moment would I endure for her sake the life I am leading here. You alone keep me to my post, you, and the hope of seeing you again.

O Sophie! what is this charm of love, that binds us to life, even to a life of torture? O dear Sophie! It is not for nothing that I endeavour to write to you on matters foreign to my love; for, when I follow the natural inclination of my heart, a torrent of grief gushes from my eyes. The image that brings to my mind the past, towards which love and desire are for ever dragging me, renders the present more horrible still and the future more formidable. Never has your presence called forth a more ardent love, or desires more eager, than those which come from your memory; the fierceness of my passion sharpens the bitter torment of my privation. What remains to me of life, without you? What

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

will remain, when once I am free again? Barren or perfidious friendships, unjust and implacable hatred, odious and deep-rooted suspicion, craven feebleness for which there is no cure, that is the harvest I shall gather when I return to the world. I am no longer of the age that feeds on vain hopes or chimerical plans, when I conjured up imaginary blessings and imaginary ills, when it took very little to infatuate, when, greedy for dissipation, I lay in wait for events and opportunities, and made everything serve my pleasure. I have now but one object of affection, ambition, or desire, and one only; I know but one happiness, and you alone can give it me. I no longer court men's esteem, reputation, titles, honours, power. My passion, my one passion is too great and too exclusive for me ever to gain the approval of those who do not love as I love; I ask for the approval of one only, feeling sure I shall win it. I have but one need, I can taste but one pleasure; I can form but one vow: but if it be frustrated and if my one need be not satisfied, if the one thing that affords me delight be for ever withheld from me, if I be doomed to be consumed in desire, and never attain fulfilment, then there is no more happiness for your Gabriel: already, without his Sophie, he knows no happiness, for Sophie is its sole source. Alas! my dearest, I still hope; but I fear it is the strength of my desires that I take for the likelihood of their fulfilment. It may be so, for my love renders me blind to my true state. Ah! beloved, you know well enough that no other cord binds

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

me to life, save that of my love. Were this cord to be cut, or rather (for you do not, I am sure, suspect me of wondering whether it will ever become loosened) were it to fail to unite us, what else should I have to live for? Why should I any longer open my eyes to look on days that I hate, as soon as the torch of love no longer illumines them? . . .

O Sophie! if you are never more to enfold your lover in your arms, what matter if this breast, that has ere now burned beneath your kisses, be icy cold and food for worms, when he, whose pleasures, whose heart and whose whole existence you share, shall be no more? Will you be farther from him than you are at this moment, this moment when you may not even accept a few sheets of paper which have been bathed by his tears and impressed with his kisses? If love refuse you the happiness you have a right to expect, why should you care whether the heart that feeds it pursue its futile course or not?—Ah! My Sophie, I will recount no more tragic tales; they make me gloomy. Farewell, my love. Forgive me my sad elegies; weep as you read them; shed your tears for your lover's grief; but remember that I shall have found consolation in your letters to me, before you get mine, if they are remitted to you by P. If by some unforeseen chance they reach you by another channel, I shall at least have the consolation of knowing that you must be less anxious and more at peace than I. Farewell, belovéd; where could you find fonder love than the love your Gabriel bears for you?

O my dear! your love, your constancy, they are

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

my one support ; without this confidence I should already be engulfed in the abyss of grief over the mouth of which fortune has suspended me. To love without ceasing is the craving of my heart ; to be for ever loved is the one hope that consoles me. Love, thou source of all the virtues, all the pleasures, all happiness, my soul is wholly thine. My only desire, my only duty, is to obey thy voice ; thou upholdest me in my life ; thou art far dearer to me than life itself, and I preserve my life but for thy dear sake : it is thou alone who givest me strength and courage, not that philosophy, so-called, which serves only to mask the weakness or the apathy of its proselytes, or those superstitious beliefs which degrade mankind. Foolish stump-orators, who never have known true happiness or real misfortune, who boast that they have gained the mastery over passions they are incapable of feeling, and who utter piercing cries of pain if they have but a twinge of gout, may maintain that man ought to rise above misfortune, no matter how great. Pious charlatans who set up a god so that they may themselves exact obedience, and even reverence, may preach that we ought to submit everything to religion ; but when we look into this religion that claims a sway so absolute, we see that policy and fraud, in concert with ignorance and credulity, have laid its foundations, and that different religions vary for the most part in dogma, without varying in the least in their points of view or the demands they make upon mankind ; dogma is the child of caprice, whereas the interests of the priests, which are

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

always the same, guide and control the exigencies of religion. A strange code to give to humankind, one which depends entirely on the chance of birth. The blind slave of bold and daring tyrants, man must fain submit his reason, his feelings even, to impressions received in infancy, upon which it is strictly forbidden him to reflect or go back. It is at the time when thought is not yet born, the heart entirely undeveloped, the senses still quiescent, hardly existing at all, that he puts himself under the authority to which, for the rest of his life, he must submit his ideas, his sensations and his sentiments. O my Sophie! you, whose breath still seems to revive me, though so long since torn from my arms, you, like your lover, spurn such odious and insensate despotism. You live for your lover, you live for love, which alone has the right to make laws for our guidance. It is to love alone that our being is consecrate, for love's sake that we preserve a life whose flame will flicker and die out the moment love's fires no longer feed it.

XIV

Ah! dear, dear love, if ever we meet again, how much more reason shall we have to love each other! What trials we shall have undergone! What tears wiped away! What thanks your lover will bestow on you for your generosity, your constancy, your courage! All his love is yours already; but his esteem increases as he sees your virtues developing

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

under fresh trials and tribulations. Let them blush for very shame who essayed to degrade you by changing your sentiments and your principles, when they see that all their suggestions, their tyranny, the weight of weary days, adversity and grief, have daunted you not one whit; that your courage has withstood their ill-natured tenacity; that although your body be separated from your wretched lover, yet your heart remains with him; that even in the eyes of the populace, who do not believe in love because they know it not, you have expiated what they are pleased to call your sin, and made it seem as respectable as it is interesting in their eyes; that it is a woman, loving and good, passionate and constant, sensible and brave, who has succeeded in stamping under foot their prejudices and substituting the true principles of nature, ay, and even persisting in them! What will they say? They may tremble with rage, but they will choke with the shame of it. Then let them. She who bore the name of a vile and contemptible septuagenarian did not consider herself his wife because a priest had permitted the aged satyr to sully her couch; she gave her heart to a lover whom she saw to be a good man; she gave him her person, she vowed to him her liberty, her life; she gave up everything for his sake; she thought she owed him reparation for the ills she feared she had brought down on his unfortunate head. No tie bound her to society: she had no children; she was not even in the eyes of the law wife to the feeble old man to whom she had been united. Not content with

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

heaping humiliations upon her, and making her life a wearisome burden, they even attacked her liberty and determined to sacrifice her to the heinous priests who had sworn to ruin her. She decided to flee from their trammels, and not to reject the happiness that lay at her feet, thereby sacrificing herself and all she held most dear to the fear of what the world might say. After all, her amours were noised abroad as much before her flight as after, thanks to the folly and treachery of her parents; her escape was made known to everybody by them. But the chimera named reputation did not, to her mind, offer an equivalent for happiness, so she threw herself into her lover's arms and fled from a land watered by her tears and habited by tyrants, to a land of love and liberty. Has she committed an imprudence? She alone has expiated it. No one in the world save her lover and herself has been punished for the error, if you would call the step they took by such a name. What would you call the courage with which she withstood the most awful reverses of fortune; the perseverance in opinion and sentiment; the dignity of her mien in a time of cruel distress; the decency of her conduct in such trying circumstances; the uniformity of her principles; the heroism of her love and of her constancy? If these are not virtues, I know not what are; and, if you agree with me that they are virtues, and rare virtues, perhaps unique in an age such as this, and in a situation of which it would be difficult to give another example, I will deliver up what you are pleased to call her *sin* to you. Surely there is more merit in

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

sinning in this way, than in groping one's way along the hard-trodden road of custom and prejudice. . . . Yes, my Sophie, you are nature's masterpiece, and were you not my mistress I should speak the more confidently still, because then I should be less exacting, and less a prey to jealousy and inquietude; and if you persist in your present course until the end, you will leave all others, both of your own sex and of mine, far behind you in the path of virtue!

O my Sophie! so fond and so kind, never the one to complain that I speak too enthusiastically of love and love's rites, you, the pattern of devotion and fond affection as you are! May you never repudiate that divine tenderness that is the mother of all the virtues; it is the essence of your nature, the happiness of your Gabriel, the fountainhead of your love. Evils may arise out of it, but it eases them all; it gives us a taste of every happiness under the sun. To you it gives the most precious of all your charms, quickness of intelligence and ingenuousness of sentiment: if you ever disguise these, I shall never put faith in anything again. It is your naked soul I long to see; and keenly do I search for trifles that are so dear to true lovers, however simple to others they may appear. It is when we use the mind to make up for the shortcomings of the heart that we neglect these trifles, and it is then that these delicious nothings, wherein the eyes of the lover reads his fate and discerns the truth, seem puerile and insipid. I am of all men the clumsiest at dissimulation, dear love, nor do I envy anyone the talent; but I have great penetration, and I do not

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

think that love, magician though he be, would blind my eyes; my love would strive against your own, if that were so; the truth means too much for me easily to be deceived. The least disguise would not escape me; but simplicity and open-hearted candour inspire me with feelings of security that are wondrous sweet, and when I read your letters, and they seem to me as spontaneous and straightforward as of yore, I can rest assured that your heart is easy too. Yet I would they were not so short, for, bright spirit that you are, you can surely for a quarter of an hour a day give play to your fancy; it is the successive variations in your thoughts and feelings that I wish to examine. You begin a page of fifteen lines with a kiss; you end it in the same way. How am I to forget my misery? in spite of all my sagacity, I can in those fifteen lines see nothing but my trouble. You do not leave me presence of mind enough to criticise you. If you were in the same straits as I am, forced to appeal for everything to the heart alone, because the mind has become exhausted through solitude, how would you manage, I wonder? . . . I am only joking, my dearest and best; if I had any real doubts as to the state of your soul, I would not speak to you like this; but it certainly is a proof of your unchanging affection for me that you still find my letters entertaining, for never was my mind more barren of ideas, never in a condition less likely to suggest new trains of thought. Such fecundity can come only from a full heart.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

XV

December 8th, 1777.

To receive news, after a period of more than six months, of one who is a thousand times dearer to me than I am myself, is a joy which I will not attempt to describe. Let my Sophie note the beating of her heart and listen to it carefully when she opens this letter: she will then know what is going on within her Gabriel's heart!—My anxiety was dreadful; there seemed no hope. The anxiety is not yet dissipated, but considerably lessened. There is some writing I should by now know how to read; but there are also some people who scribble so that skill in deciphering and even habit count for nothing at all, people who make a 20 just like a 10, so that, at a time when dates are of so much importance, I am uncertain which is meant. But, taking it that it was the 20th on which the precious news was despatched, what an immense gap between the 20th and the 28th, when it would take no more than an hour, a minute, a second, to announce events I would give a thousand lives to hear—if I had them! Ah, what would I not give for my Sophie to read this letter before the crisis, that time when the utmost tranquillity of mind is essential! . . . I have no control over the past (alas, I have no control over anything!); let me, if possible, take advantage of the present. I must make haste. Would that I could send these lines

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

flying to you through the air, these lines which I write with a hand that trembles with the beating of my heart!

I was always assured that I should not be left in ignorance of your confinement; but it seems to me that the kindness of those who once took an interest in us and pitied our sad fate has come to an end. Do not delay an instant in assuring me that all is well. Just an 'I love you, I live,' and I shall breathe again.—Poor little child! Dearest to me in all the world, save you. I have been thinking that by far the wisest, the noblest, the safest, and the most loving course for you to adopt is that of nursing the child yourself. It must be that there are some very strong objections of which I am unaware, since it has not occurred to you to do so. After all, my ideas cannot be worth much, since I know nothing.

What I implore you on bended knee to do, is to write to me as soon as it is at all possible, and in as many words as your condition will allow, of the news of your confinement. I will not describe my anxiety to you in actual words, but you can easily picture it to yourself. Tell me, tell me that you live and are no longer in pain; the truth, mind! Tell me about your child, of the kisses you have given him, and of those you are going to give him for his wretched father. . . . Free me from this suffocating uncertainty. You know my heart's deep feeling, how I would lay down my life for you. I see you, I hear you; you follow me wherever I go:

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

in vain do I shut my eyes and stop my ears; alas! the phantom is within my heart. Do nothing imprudent; remember that you are half of me; when you feel disposed to neglect your health you neglect mine. Bear your pains patiently; do not urge the doctor to expedite matters: leave it to nature to deliver you. . . . Ah! I cannot bear to write of it; my poor heart throbs in sympathy.—I need not tell you to write carefully; this letter shows you the necessity sufficiently; maybe I give myself up to the torrent of my passion too completely. I shall not say to you: keep tranquil, keep in a contented frame of mind; I know how impossible that would be; but I will say: be patient, and do not let my misfortunes afflict you more than your own; for, at bottom, yours are the greater and more terrible. At the time of our deepest dejection, when we have almost given up hope, often a ray of light will pierce the gloom when least it is expected. Who knows but that the future does not hold events more favourable than we dare hope? I have not deserved all my misfortune, I know, and your heart repeats the same to you with wearying reiteration; but neither have I deserved all the happiness that has fallen to my lot. Alas! it soon vanished; only one short harvest of our love have we reaped! Perhaps it has not gone for good, my Sophie; would you not be shunning it, if you allow grief to destroy your health and shorten your days? Remember this, my best beloved, that the only one of my ills for which there is no remedy is one which you alone can inflict. Think of what I say, weigh

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

it well, and you will have the key to all my feelings and to all my thoughts. I could say a great deal more to you on this subject, if I had the time, and if I were not afraid of giving rein to my thoughts. What you must feel I know by what I feel myself. I dread that those round you may not get to know you in time. You are so sweet and gentle, they may not realise the energy of which your heart is capable. We do not sufficiently appreciate the fact that the more sweet and gentle the disposition, the more inflexible is it when a certain course of action has been determined upon, after mature deliberation. It seems to me therefore not improbable that they will take for granted that the agitation to which your misfortunes and your unhappy passion have given rise in your soul will go the way of all great movements, all extraordinary crises,—that is, it will soon subside. I, who know you so well, know that no one in the world can show greater firmness of character, when convinced that the interests of love and of justice are concerned. You will die, but you will never alter. I dread to think that in their ignorance they may drive you to extremities, and perhaps not suspect that . . . but there, I have news of you, that at any rate is certain, and I cannot doubt but that it is authentic; you must by now have had my letter. Be calm, my all, my universe! be calm, and wait at least until fresh misfortunes fall, if fall they must. . . . —I must stop, for time presses; O my dear! perhaps I am only indiscreet! I repeat it, you know my heart; you cannot mistake my writing; you are

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

therefore sure that I live: and that is equivalent to saying I love you, and how much I love you.

GABRIEL.

Add to my name all that I dare not write. Burn this letter; it would be wiser.

XVI

Friday—January 9th.

My dear, my one love! I have washed your note in my tears, I have covered it with my kisses. . . . O my dear, my Sophie! what a weight off my heart! And what a weight still remains! Alas! you tell me nothing of yourself, of your health. Your letter was written while you were in pain, I can see; you add one word, one short word, only, after the event. How quavering it is, too! The feeble characters rend my heart in twain! I see thy hand, thee, thee, in everything! Thy soul everywhere! but alas! how art thou, my Sophie? Tell me, I beseech thee, tell me. How can I bear it? My heart is sore, alas, torn to pieces by anxiety. Do not worry over this letter, or the change in my handwriting; it is only worry and the emotions that are born of your news that have caused me to write so distractedly. I have not waited until I recovered a little from the shock, because I wanted you to enjoy the pleasure of a letter from me as soon as possible. . . . Dear, dear Sophie! A mother! Alas! And your child is to be left to you! May he soften your misfortunes and lessen your griefs! I say *your* child,—

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

but I know well enough that he is also mine! Never could your lover forego so dear a title. . . . Cruel Sophie, to reproach yourself for *my* miseries. Great Heavens! is it not I who am responsible for everything? Do you imagine I ever think of anything else? But be calm, I beseech you, O my happiness! Remember you are my other half; you make an attempt upon my life by neglecting yours. . . . You ought to keep quite quiet, my Sophie; I implore you to take care of yourself, to save yourself for happier times. . . . It would be a great consolation to me to know that you have received this letter; if you are allowed to write, let me know how you are; above everything, tell me the truth . . . ah! keep nothing back; but do not write before you can do so without danger or even inconvenience. My heart aches; but I have still all my strength, and you have not: do not hurry, whatever you do; I can bear a little more. . . . My daughter has my features, you tell me? You have made her but a poor present, beloved; but so long as she has your soul, she will be rich indeed; nature will have amply compensated her for the disadvantages of her birth! I will not write much to-day; I do not want to, I cannot. I am afraid of my heart, I am afraid of my head, I am afraid of your condition. My dear, my Sophie, I ask you on bended knee, I implore you, I beseech you in the name of your daughter, of her father, of all the oaths we ever took, of all the love you express so well by not daring to express it, take care of yourself, neglect nothing that will restore you speedily to health

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

and strength ; expend upon yourself, in short, that noble strength of mind that is so admirable a part of your character. Farewell : farewell, my life and happiness, farewell.

XVII

I received your letter of the 12th, my dear and best beloved, to-day, Sunday, the 19th. I did not dare to hope that you would be able to write so soon, my dearest ! Five days are a very short interval for you to have regained strength enough to write, and if I could I would scold you : but how can I ? I hope the milk-fever is over by now and that none of those accidents have occurred that are so dangerous in the early days of a confinement. Remember, my dear love, that a woman's health depends on the first few weeks of her lying-in, weeks that demand absolute care and attention to every detail of health. When she does not nurse her child, she has need of still greater circumspection, in order that nature may overcome so violent a transgression of her laws. Loving you as I do, I knew my letter would do you no harm : I too have shed floods of tears ; I know how tears relieve the overburdened soul. How often do we invoke them to no purpose ! I feel almost entirely relieved of the devouring anxiety that consumed me. Your writing is firm, and your head seems clear. How I have dreaded your confinement, your first confinement, a crisis in every woman's life ; and now it is over and you are safe ! Surely, my dearest, surely the

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

event augurs well for the future. Had she meant to ruin us entirely, Fortune would have done it at a blow. There is no more harm she can do us: to despatch us would be to heal our wounds once and for all. Let us hope that her remedies may be of a gentler order.

You can say what you like about the face of your baby; I am convinced it will be your features that hers will resemble. Love will discover the likeness. You would hardly think me unhappy at all if you knew the tenderness that wells up within me at the sound of the sweet word, daughter. She will take something from us both, beloved; from her father, her love for her mother; from her mother, her virtues and her charms. Let it be so: she will be gifted enough to be able to afford to divide herself between the two.

I can hardly tell you how touched I am by your writing to me in the midst of your suffering; I saw that you had done so as soon as I read your letter; I can hardly tell you how it affected me. . . . I have but a moment left: my pen is flying over the paper; I cannot unbosom myself; but know this, that never, never before have I loved you so dearly. . . . It is since the 9th of January that I have learnt what love is: You were in pain for twenty-four hours *only*? How long did you think you ought to have suffered? Ah! how well I know your courage, even as you know my heart. . . . I am a little calmer now; your second letter has greatly reassured me; I feel sure you are not deceiving me: your hand, your lips were always the mouthpiece of your heart.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

What is that you say: '*all one . . . it is all one to me whether I have a boy or a girl!*' . . . No, no, madame: *you* wished for a boy; as for me, I never longed for anything but a girl, because my heart told me she would be the image of her mother. A boy would have had my faults: it is far more dangerous to spoil a boy than a girl, because his nature is more violent; and I know perfectly well that I could never reprove a child of yours. . . . Without entering into details of affairs about which, as I know nothing of them, I could only speak as the colour-blind speak of colours, I swear that I have never thought anything of you, nor ever shall, that was not highly to your credit: it is you alone, you alone who can calumniate yourself with me. Your principles are confirmed alike by reason and by love; can I doubt that they will ever fail you? I have known my Sophie, for do I not love her; the heart that has called to her heart is not wholly unworthy, for it can appreciate loveliness when it sees it. Yes, yes, what we see of those on whose mercy we are for the moment dependent ought to bid us hope. High places do not necessarily wither hearts. But of my gratitude I cannot speak; the words would scarce be adequate. But, my best beloved, I would stand surety that you can guess it and that you share it with me: a heart as loving as your own can never forget the blessing it has received: and what a blessing! Could they have bestowed a greater, in offering us our lives? . . . I have had news of my mother's health. She is well, they say. She loves me still: you know

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

if I deserve it. . . . I am as eager to finish my letter and despatch it as you were over yours; but I have reason to hope that it will not be the last you will send me, provided you are circumspect and frame your request to our benefactor in terms that cannot fail to touch his heart. To know from time to time that you are still alive is to know all, for then I know your heart's condition. Events are but accessories to our knowledge, and upon them we ought to keep silent. Your first letter was burnt before my eyes; this second one will be snatched from me,—and I shall have no copy of it, either, save what is graven on the heart.

There is no doubt, my dearest, that I have received some very violent shocks, but the most terrible are over. I am not yet eight and twenty: nature has endowed me with an excellent constitution; I love life when I am happy, and I am very happy when I read your letters. The memory of my happiness is long in fading, and I have hopes that you will be permitted to refresh it. Do not worry about my health; its vagaries are not formidable; you can not be surprised that it is not so good as when I am enjoying my life. You scold me for saying nothing about it. . . . But remember the circumstances; did you think what I was when I wrote? did you think what I was in myself? Was not my soul stretched out on the paper? My darling, I cannot even say I love you, if I cannot say it at my ease; therefore there will be no tender ending to this letter; but you know all I feel; ah! yes, you know it perfectly: for your heart and mine are

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

fashioned of the same material. Question your own heart, then, my child! A triumph indeed, this of allowing you to consider your sentiments equal in depth to my own! When you next see your child, give her all the kisses I would give her were she here. Why did you tell me she was pretty? Did you think to praise her so? She has other merits than that, assuredly! Dear, she is your daughter, she is mine. Ah! when shall I be able to look after her happiness, I wonder? It will be, you may be sure, the second, and one of the most precious objects of my life. To-day I can but pray for her; can but let her share with you my prayers . . . but she may only *share* them. If she thinks she can ever be a rival to her mother, she is greatly mistaken. Farewell, my dear, my only dear. Remember your promise to take care of your health; try to send me word of it, adding always a few words about the little one. You are not likely to forget her! there are two Sophies now: my child, you make me responsible for two Sophies; but first must I be responsible for my Sophie-Gabriel, and that shall I ever be. . . . Alas! my dearest, to think I must leave some blank pages! But I am not the master, and I am too grateful to be guilty of any indiscretion. Farewell; the tenderest of farewells, without number, without count.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

XVIII

March 2nd, 1778.

I have just received your letter of the 19th of February, my dear, my very dear. I can no longer describe what I experience when I see your writing: my feelings are so tumultuous, my head and my senses so weak. My heart with its burden of sadness and of love would overflow if I gave vent to my emotions. I feel, far more than I can say, how necessary it is for me to keep a check upon myself, lest the satisfaction that is afforded me by your letters may be denied you. It is almost as cruel for me to feel a pleasure in which you have no part, as it would be for me voluntarily to cause you pain. You may be sure that I do not often suffer annoyances in the shape of pleasures unshared! but should I not be depriving you of a certain sweet consolation were I, in this letter, to take a liberty that might cause it to be stopped? Therefore I must contain myself: alas! I must contain myself; and it is not the least sacrifice I shall have made to you, to circumstance, to the gratitude even that I owe to the precious condescension that brings a sight of your handwriting to my eyes, that I trace lines so cold, so icy cold, I, your Gabriel, whose heart is afire for love of you.

If your health is really good, I have one great anxiety the less. My imagination had greatly exaggerated the dangers of your condition. But I

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

believe you, I wish to believe you. Take care of your health, my dearest; take care of it, so that half of me, at least, be not ailing. You wish me to speak of the other half; I must, since you wish it. I am not very well, neither am I what you would call really ill. The sedentary life exhausts my strength, and the perpetual work does little to build it up. I am consumed with passion; it gnaws at my vitals; but I am young and can stand a little suffering. My chest is better than it was. The milk and cooling medicines have done it good and saved me a great deal of pain. After a hæmorrhage I invariably feel relief. My kidneys are worse. I have always been threatened with renal colic, and now it has attacked me: another inevitable result of a sedentary life. So much for the details you ask for. I know not how to disguise the truth; deceit is always disagreeable, and in this case useless. . . . Yes, my dearest, save yourself for our daughter's sake. Poor child! May the star of her father, of that father who, by an inconceivable fatality, has sacrificed his whole life to the ungrateful and the wicked and made a sacrifice only of her whom he adores; may this star, unique in strange happenings and in adversity, not pursue her destiny! May she bring back to her mother's breast the happiness that I have driven from it! I hope, I dare to hope that they will occasionally permit you to tell me that you still breathe; and that I shall have the double consolation of knowing of your existence and of hers. . . . For the rest, my dearest, I repeat for the

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

hundred-thousandth time, leave all making of plans, all building up of illusions, all calculations, alone; disappointment is inevitable and over-hard to bear. Your imagination is too active; sulphurous exhalations rise from the hearth of your mind when the fuel of your ardent soul is laid upon it; it needs but very little to set it alight; and as it burns, lightning darts from its midst. Sophie, Sophie! trust not to fate; do you not know how treacherous are fate's caresses? Resign yourself, if you can; and do not create new torments by imagining chimeras which only exist within your head and your troubled heart.

I refuse to listen to you when you conjure up harrowing memories; I ought not to, and I do not believe I could. . . . Just one remark on that word *jealousy*. On what is yours based? on locks and bolts. Certainly, unless you believe in sylphs, in beauties of the air, you cannot but set your mind at rest. As for my jealousy, have I ever spoken of it to you? . . . Yes, yes, my heart is yours; if you take it, you can say to yourself: 'I shall never lose this possession, so long as a single breath remains in Gabriel's body.' . . . A poor consolation, doubtless; and yet not without a certain sweetness: for love, disinterested love, is the only homage that satisfies alike the heart and one's self-respect. I discovered a tear on your paper; I kissed the mark it left, my Sophie dear! But why weep barren tears? Alas, they relieve the heart of the pressure of its misery. Well then! weep, my child; I envy you the happiness of tears. . . . To reply to the

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

charming things you write to me does not trouble me in the least; the trouble is not to reply to them. Yours is a pretty wit, my Sophie-Gabriel! almost too pretty, were it not so natural and unforced. I am so stupid! why are you so clever? . . . So you have found a friend! I congratulate you: a friend is one of heaven's rarest blessings. Who merits friends more than you? Who has found fewer? Sophie, adversity has not dried up your heart, that inexhaustible fount of feeling, but you need to be circumspect as well as loving: sound the piece of ground on which you stand; roses ere now have hid the jagged thorns and bottomless abyss. . . . Heaven preserve me from filling you with unworthy suspicions. You can tell me whether your lover is too distrustful; you can even tell me if he is trustful enough: you can tell me if he is inclined to cherish that on which your love has been bestowed; but alas! as I look backward, I can call to mind errors without number which mistaken confidence, a generous confidence, has led us to commit. But I am delighted to know you have a little society. Distractions are priceless in a time of great sorrow, however little they appeal to us. . . . I shall not speak of your wishes on my behalf, nor of the permission that you give me; you suppose a case that will never come to pass. Ah no, no, I assure you, no new proposals that they are likely to make to me need cause you the least anxiety. Boston would have been a safe retreat for you . . . an honourable one for me. . . . But why speak of the past? I can neither reproach myself nor profess

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

repentance. I shudder at the thought of the present. Yes, I shudder; I would, at the price of my life's blood, win you your liberty and obtain for you what you desire: the sacrifice would be a dear delight. And it is easy enough to believe this, surely; if you think a moment, you will see that you have written unbecomingly, if I say so, on this subject. . . . I implore you, my beloved, take care of yourself and, if this letter reaches you, see to it that it be not the last you are to receive. It seems to me it is very necessary for both of us, for many reasons, to hear from one another. But whatever happens, you may be sure, very sure, my Sophie, that your name will be the last my lips shall utter; that the feelings that I have for you, which you have discerned in me, and which have become the sole end and aim of my life, will be the last that shall well up within my heart, and shall warm it until such time as destiny has marked out for the end of its existence. Farewell, my Sophie-Gabriel; farewell, my life, my all. I know you will guess all I leave unsaid. Thousands and thousands of kisses to your child, if you see her still.

XIX

March 20th, 1778.

O my dearest! I have received your letter, your delightful letter; again and again have I put it to my burning lips. Dear Sophie! how natural and how touching is all you write! . . . How well you

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

know the way to the heart of your dear love! . . . My peerless mistress! And yet how sad is this letter that brings me so much happiness. You know what I mean by that. I know only too well that you cannot but be sad; but you seem to me anxious, if not about my feelings, then about my thoughts. . . . You, my all! you, my blessing! Do you not know that I could never, never doubt either your love or your constancy, either your charm or the kindness of your heart? Do you not know that I respect you as I love you? Ah! were I to doubt my Sophie, could I still live on? Dear one, if some of the expressions in my last letter struck you as containing a double meaning, it was because I had reason to fear that unless I kept narrowly to the path of circumspection, you would be deprived of my letters altogether; and the happiness of receiving news from you would be utterly ruined by the knowledge that you were less fortunate in the receipt of letters. . . .

O generous, noble-hearted mistress! I know you impute none of your misfortunes to your Gabriel. He deserves your generosity because of the purity of his intentions and the depth of his devotion, because of his sincerity and well-nigh inconceivable tenderness; but how is it possible to look dry-eyed upon the ills of which you are the victim? My love, my only happiness! I know all you would say; it is because I know it so well that I dare not speak of it. You may rest assured that no one but yourself can ever accuse you of any evil-doing; I

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

have entire confidence, I do not say in your faithfulness, or, in short, in any of the self-respecting virtues, but in any steps you may choose to take: you may be sure that I approve in advance of all you do, and that I should suspect the entire universe, I should suspect myself before entertaining the least little doubt of my Sophie-Gabriel. I know her soul, her principles, her resolutions, or, to say all in one word, I know her duty; it is enough to ensure me that she will never depart from it . . . ; extol me, my love, if you will; but not what I have done for you. Would you bestow praise on me for not being a monster?

No, no, my dear, good Sophie, there was no question of an *if*; but do you really think I write with academic rigour? I have half-an-hour in which to pen a few lines. My heart is beating so wildly that it seems as if it would jump out of my body; my mind is at boiling point, and you wish me to weigh my words! Truly, though, had I the time, I should employ it rather in writing at greater length than in carefully arranging what I have to say; I chat with you, my child; my heart unbosoms itself, or would that it did! . . . Alas! alas! a look, a spoken word, would say more than a thousand volumes of letters! Then there would be no doubt or uncertainty; thou and I and happiness would make a little party of three.

But, my dearest, do not abuse your intellect; it is the best tool a noble heart can employ, or rather should I say, nothing is so rare as a noble heart without intelligence. Although my imagination is

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

parched and dried, and I am good for nothing unless my heart is the spokesman, yet I feel more than ever the value of elegance and simplicity, simplicity especially. Nothing is so lovable; it is the dress of all true feeling, the dress of truth itself: it is that that constitutes the charm of your letters; that that renders them so touching. Simplicity does not take the place of strength, far from it; on the contrary, it brings strength in its wake. With simplicity alone can we describe the real workings of the passions. All those affectations that our fine blades are so fond of are banned by simplicity; all brilliant sallies, antitheses, far-fetched ideas, play upon words, tricks and turns of speech. That all this should spring from a ready intelligence is lamentable indeed;—but assuredly it does not come from yours. Empty ornaments and figures of speech, things written down simply because of their brilliancy, revealing as they do a barrenness of soul and a corrupt taste, are entirely foreign to your style. To you belongs essentially that attribute of true feeling, exquisite tact. A lively nature, a delicious ingenuousness, a sweet tenderness breathe from the pages of your letters; and I only lose confidence in you, wicked little flatterer, when you take to praising me. . . . Come, my Sophie, keep your style unaltered; you could only change it for a worse. You are very likely surprised that I should speak thus to you; for, besides the fact that your foolish and charming modesty (foolish because excessive) only attributes what I say about your magic style to my prejudice, you do not seem to

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

think there is the least merit in writing a good letter, in quite naturally expressing what you think, and what you feel. But, my dear, you are mistaken. True eloquence lies in saying the suitable thing, in giving to every sentiment, every thought, its proper background; in a word, in saying something just as it should be said. To be impassioned, therein lies the whole secret of the art of oratory, my Sophie: hence you are far wiser than you think. . . . Be not surprised to see this letter developing into a lecture, for you must understand that but for that I should have finished my letter long ago, for fear of inserting what might be displeasing to our friend and benefactor. . . . Ah! my dearest, how fondly ought we to cherish him! He restores us to life, of which we have almost been deprived by those who gave it us.

How kind of you to send me such good news of my little Gabriel-Sophie! Ah! my beloved, she is the child of my heart, as well as of my blood. If you but knew how many times in my dreams I see her encircled in our arms! Our lips rest upon hers together; we envelop her in the vapour of our breath, even as she owes her life to that of our dear love: she smiles at our caresses. . . . O my dear! my love is increased a hundredfold now that you have given birth to a second self, who is my second self as well! . . . Little silly! to say she is like me! . . . You frighten me! But no, you do not! for I am sure she is like you, entirely like you. Were I as beautiful as Adonis, I would rather she resembled you. . . . Do you know what she will do,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

our little one (for she will be wise, for sure)? She will take something from both of us: from you, complexion, features, attitude of mind, character, charm, virtue: from me, the voice I once had, the few talents I have acquired, and the tender inexpressible immortal love which burns in my bosom for you: from us both, courage, candour, generosity, sensibility: in a word, little Gabriel-Sophie will derive from her mother all that is good and lovable, her attractiveness and her charms; and, respectfully passing by the defects of *monsieur* her father, will borrow only just what pleases her mother in him; in short, her motto will be one that seems to have been expressly written for my Sophie: '*Chirede in bel corpo anima bella. . .*' Yes, my darling, I will be sparing of myself for your sake and for hers, so long as I am sure of your existence and some hope of consecrating my life to my love still remains. . . . You need have no fears for your daughter's fate, unless the State intervenes and does away with me! . . . Without now going into your hopes and calculations, O my best beloved, I would but impress upon your mind how far I am from wishing to cast a gloom over them.

I to reproach you for your tears! I, who cause them to flow! . . . Ah! Sophie! you must have sadly misinterpreted my letter; perhaps it was too sad. I suffered, I was pressed for time, and I feared lest you would be denied the consolation I had had, and this wrung my heart. But now I am better, as you see. O my dearest, my dearest!

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

May your heart expand as you read these few lines dictated by love, but by a love kept within bounds by prudence!

XX

O my dearest, what uncalled-for happiness, what a torrent of desire is rushing through my blood! I received your letter at the very moment of sealing mine to you, asking for one from you. It is a sweet and tender letter, as amiable as you yourself are amiable; it reassures me as to your health; it fires my blood; but it is a vivifying warmth that it brings with it. Yes, every time that Gabriel catches a glimpse of your character, every time that he receives assurance of your love, every time that the touch of your breath, your hands, your eyes, perhaps, too, that of your lips, rests on the paper that, alas, I may not keep for long, but which I strew with my kisses as long as I have it in my power to do so; every time these treasures meet my eyes, methinks I go to the very fountain-head of life, that I arrest the scythe of time, and ward off, at any rate for a time, the poisons in which misfortune would steep me.

No, no, my Sophie, no, you have done nothing to displease me. I was sad when I wrote the letter that caused you so much pain; I thought I saw reason for thinking that you had not received my letters, I trembled at the thought of receiving no more from you, I felt the life's blood ebbing from my heart as hope died within my breast. You know

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

how my mind is coloured by the feelings that are agitating me at the time ; judge for yourself whether my style has reason to be gloomy ; but, my dear love, my black mood had naught to do with you. My confidence in you has suffered no change, that I swear. . . . O my Sophie-Gabriel ! the delight of having a mistress so charming, and feeling as safe of her as if she was an ugly old hag whom no one wanted ! Alas ! there is a delight far greater still, that of being by her side ! to be absent from her spoils all other pleasure life may have to offer. Moreover, when I speak of *safety*, darling, I do not exclude jealousy, but *suspicion*. Suspicion, to my mind, disgraces two lovers. From that restless passion which I call jealousy, which is but the fear of being less well loved, I maintain that no love worthy the name is ever quite exempt. I cannot cure me of my jealousy, nor do I excuse myself of it ; but never fear that I shall ever conceive those odious suspicions that change love into gall and bitterness, and are the canker in love's roses.

My dear ! I assure you that this august mansion stands in one of those very places where the air is highly spoken of, for lack of something else to appraise. Rest assured, therefore ; the air is excellent ; and what is more, ample precautions are being taken against epidemic maladies : no evil infection will carry me off, you may be sure.

What ! Did you think snow was peculiar to Pontarlier ? It seems to me you never saw more than you did at Amsterdam ; but, alas ! it is very

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

true, it is only too true that the disposition of one's soul colours everything. . . .

Oh! '*mes beaux yeux*,'—I cannot let that pass; I laughed like a lunatic at what you said. It reminded me of the description given of me by a certain lady of your acquaintance to a man who had been commissioned to discover my whereabouts; by the road she took, she would never have reached her end! I said to myself: 'This lady can never have read the fable that tells how the eagle, one day, devoured some little owls, for he could not think that such ugly monsters were the children of which his dear friend had so proudly boasted.' Your family is not good at describing people. Madame de R. describes me very badly, as you know; and when she came to see me, she added the 'air of a peasant' to the picture, a feature by which I have never seen others struck. The other of portraits wanted to make me out an Adonis and not quite succeeding in disguising the carving with which it has pleased dame Nature to adorn me, she cited my '*beaux yeux*'; had I found them, such as she described them, I confess I should not have known myself; but amour-propre is a clever interpreter; it might aid me, where it would be no help whatever to those who were seeking to find me. . . . But I pray you, do not make fun of me, or, if you are in earnest, be silent for your honour's sake. After all, I would far rather my eyes were *good* than *fine*; and they are fast becoming so bad that I fear I may lose them altogether. The right eye, always bathed in water,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

sees nothing except through a haze of numberless black dots. The left is very weak; I must soon seriously consult an oculist about such very disquieting symptoms. Were I to become blind, I should love you neither more nor less; but, for all that, I must preserve my eyes.

My dear love, ask for paper; I am sure they will let you have it. In the strictest houses they give out paper, and, for that matter, we are not treated very strictly. You like work and study: you should make notes and extracts of what you read, if you would read with profit; I should be sorry if you neglected your Italian, the language of love *par excellence*.

You put a strange question to me: 'How do I feel?' I might begin by telling you in all seriousness that, having regard to circumstance and the rules of the house, I feel as well as can be expected. For the rest, I shall reply by a lampoon; for how would you I should reply to your question? The prisoners of London, to pass the time away, sing! 'Alexander was a prisoner in the midst of the universe; the king of England is one in the midst of his island, the Sultan in his seraglio, the monk in his cell, the scholar in his closet, the lord in his carriage, the tradesman in his shop; all men then are prisoners, and the whole earth is one vast prison.' You see there is a way of enlivening every subject; but I avow that of all prisoners we are held the fastest. My dear and best beloved, do not worry over my lot;

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

it is and will ever be quite bearable so long as I hear from you. In the bitterness of your heart, you ask yourself too often: 'Alas! what has my Gabriel done that he should be so wretched?' and do not include yourself in the question, although you are far more innocent than I. But no, Sophie, we must endeavour to believe, in spite of all the prejudices of pride and the pious reveries in which we have been cradled, that it matters little to nature that such and such an one is unhappy, suffering or dead, provided only the species is preserved. We have received our lives at her hands, without knowing how or why; we shall lose them in the same way, and we shall never know why our path has been strewn with rocks, or what we have done to deserve so craggy a road. I know that this is no consolation, O my dearest love! but thoughts such as these ought to teach us to cease from useless pining. The end of our existence, our passions, our actions is never known to us; but as long as I have breath left in my body I shall know how to employ my life; I shall spend it in adoration of my darling.

My dear one, I have no liking for war at all, except as a means of getting me out of here. Those who know me are not likely to think my love has made me a coward. No, no, not a coward, but less ambitious than I was; and what in the world is more foolish than this war fever, may I ask? . . . O my darling! how much is there for men to do, especially happy men, besides killing each other? I know you

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

think with me, my dear, peace-loving friend, who wish ill to none but traitors and persecutors. But my Sophie is no coward, either, although she is so gentle; and our daughter will be brave as she. I want her to ride and hunt, and shoot, so that she may unite to the charms of her own sex the advantages of ours; but this must not make her *mannish*, for such affectation spoils everything. She should be a man and appear a woman as you do. The soul knows no sex, but the body has its sex; and the one must not trespass on the rights of the other. My Sophie-Gabriel, so charming and so good, so brave and so gentle, I have many a time admired your strength, I adore your resoluteness and your contempt for the prejudices of your own sex and even of ours; but at the same time, your charming ingenuousness, your naïveté, and even those delicious nothings which would seem ridiculous in a man, but yet adorn a woman, how happy they have made me! . . . Ah, Sophie! Sophie-Gabriel! To you was it given to be to your lover mistress the most loving, friend the most trusty, comrade the most useful. You alone have succeeded in combining the strength and devotion of man with the delicate tenderness of woman; the most luscious fruits of friendship with the most fragrant flowers of love.

‘I speak too highly of you’: apparently because I think highly of you, too; for assuredly I only say what I think. However that may be, I hardly know whether I sleep or wake; but it is a beautiful dream; it will be a long dream, and I tremble

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

to think of the awakening, for nothing can replace so dear an illusion.

My love, I want you to have your little daughter's head shaved as soon as possible: my reasons are too lengthy to set down here, but it is a healthy thing to do and you know that I would never recommend you to adopt any old woman's notions, for I know of none; were it only to ensure her a fine head of hair, it would be worth while. I know that learned men declare that one must be bald if one would be wise; they instance the times of old, when most great men were bald. They also find in modern history many examples of the illustrious bald! But so long as my daughter has a heart, I do not mind; I shall only like her the better if she be a little more pretty and a little less wise. For the rest, there are reasons connected with health, more serious than the interests of the hair, which recommend this practice. Yes, my dearest, I have expressed my gratitude to our benefactor to the best of my ability. Alas! what would have become of me if he had not kept his head? Imagine, you who know the passion that burns within my heart, since you yourself set fire to it; imagine, I say, the state of your Gabriel when he was uncertain whether you were alive or dead, uncertain whether you were delivered or still in pain. . . . I gnawed at my chains, and I called on death, but did not dare to inflict it on myself, for fear of raising an eternal barrier between myself and happiness; for the return of happiness is not yet quite impossible. . . . But could I have borne

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

this state of ferment long, this state that fed on love, and that time, my thoughts and my imagination did but aggravate? . . . My reason, too, embittered it, and it was my duty to despair.

I do not know, Madame Sophie, if you will consider my *pride* misplaced when I say that this sheet contains more writing than I can find in ten of your letters. I hope, I venture to hope, with feelings of gratitude which are as keen as desire itself, that I shall receive more, and that in them I shall be informed from time to time of my Sophie-Gabriel and my precious child. . . . Ah! were she only in your arms, you would kiss her again and again for her father's sake; you would tell her to love me and she would love me; for you would paint me in colours becoming to her eyes, so becoming, in fact, that, when she comes to see me, the little creature will surely say: 'What! Is that all? By my faith, mother is easily pleased!' . . . There, there, let her be loved but half as well as I love her mother, and then see how even small-pox marks can be overlooked! . . . My Sophie! you adorn the soul and spirit of your Gabriel, sometimes even his features, to please your imagination and your loving heart. Love is the veil that hides my many defects. I smile at your enthusiasm; I prize it highly, indeed, as the irrefutable proof of your love; but I still reserve the right to criticise myself. I can at least be sure of never having deceived you, of having disguised none of my faults, none of my sentiments, none of my thoughts. You will never accuse

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

me of wishing to appear other than I am. The foundations of a lasting passion are not wanting: you respect him you love, and I venture to think I am worthy of your respect: my defects belong to my mind or my humours; my good qualities are of the heart. It is the heart that touches you: my sensibility, my straightforwardness and my devotion have won the victory; it is they that have achieved my happiness. And these charms, the only ones worthy of yourself, will last for ages and never wither.

Farewell, my all. Farewell, my life. Farewell, my Sophie-Gabriel. Alas! Farewell.

XXI

O my dear! it is the month of May that has weighed so heavily upon me. I was in the depths; and without hope of help from our patron, either. But thanks be to him: I have your letter, here it is: it has renewed my heart's strength; I breathe again; and if I have a sense of the misery of the universe, it is called up in me by the throbs of love and pleasure. O my Sophie, my adorable Sophie! How I wanted your letter! How kind you are! How well you express your kindness! It gives life to a heart that was hungering for love, this delicious letter, although so sad. Yes, my happiness! I am at the fountain-head of life when I receive assurance of your love; and this touching ingenuousness, this inimitable simplicity, so earnest, so ardent,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

exalts my being to the same pitch. I forget my position and your own, my ills and yours, my anxieties, my fears, I forget all, even our miseries: I hear you, I see you; but alas! I long to fling myself into your arms and, lo, the illusion is destroyed and my eyes fall once more upon my irons and my tears gush out, and my bosom is wet with their dew: and yet such tears do no harm, softened as they are by the hope that your letters bring to my heart. Ah! Sophie! my love is the breath of my life.

Cruel friend! what a day to remember! . . . I am not so brave; I dare not speak of it; the wound still bleeds. Alas! our hearts were one; the cruel sword of grief has separated them . . . who can heal such a wound?

Well, yes, since you have guessed it, I confess: it has deeply grieved me to think that our letters have been for a time stopped by our imprudent behaviour. But I hope we are safe from that dangerous reef. We now only speak of such just and natural sentiments that they can be easily and fully understood; they are compatible with our anxieties. Let us carefully avoid anything likely to be displeasing, in token of the gratitude we owe to those who have afforded us a precious proof of their willingness to do all they can for us. So they found your letters long! Alas! lovers must have sight peculiar to themselves, it seems; I found them so short, so skimpy! But it is your own fault, my Sophie, your own fault; I tell you. Your writing, which might be considered a veritable Sunday writing, but for

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

scrawls that love introduces from time to time, is very deceiving. Since it is small, they think there is much of it; and really there is hardly any! The lines are so far apart, the words you use so long, that nothing in the world plays the hypocrite like your writing!

My Sophie, you ought to know that my mind is always in unison with my heart; therefore, when you see that my style is easy, you may rest assured that my heart, too, is at ease; that I am content with my Sophie-Gabriel; that my happiness is unalloyed. One thing you can always believe, it is so very true, and that is that I am less jealous in absence than I am when present, although I am of a very jealous disposition, remember! This difference is really a sure proof of my regard for you. When I am with you, love gets the better of my reason: some small thing offends it and it becomes a savage beast, a hydra-headed monster. I almost wish that your eyes could not see at all rather than they should see things other than myself. In absence, when reason counts for something, because the senses are quieter, I am so strongly convinced that you cannot but be faithful, and even constant, that the sacred rights, of which you are the repository, are indefeasible, and kept under the strictest guard inviolate; that a heart like yours can cherish none but sacred duties; that a love like our own can not be replaced by anything under the sun; that a being capable of a passion such as ours is incapable of treachery; that one who has tasted the delights which we have

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

tasted can never find pleasure in a love which, though it be as tender, as deep as the original love (and this is contrary to nature), must still be accompanied with feelings of bitter remorse: all this presents itself so distinctly to my mind and to my heart that my jealousy must needs be blunted. I feel its attacks, sure enough, but they come upon me without tearing me to pieces. It is that I fear to be loved less, not to be no longer loved. Ah! my Sophie, the idea of this alone is enough to oppress my spirit. Never, never will I consent to lose the least portion of your love. The treasure is necessary to me in its entirety, and I shall perish if deprived of the least little part of it.

Joking apart, my dearest dear (for I can really only laugh on the wrong side of my mouth, if at all), I feel much better in health. The weather is fine, and your letter will make the day seem brighter still. Everything invites us to love, everything has donned the livery of Spring: all is blossoming, matting, entwining, joining hands: we are alone, alone, alack the day! United only in thought, in desire, in hope. But for all that, this pleasant season of the year is restoring me to health. I take a walk every day; during the past week I have walked until nine o'clock in the morning; it is not long; but I quit the garden without regret, thinking as I do so that I leave room for some equally unhappy comrade. Dear and tender Sophie! So you want to be walking at the same time as I am: alas! two lovers, who were kept apart, once promised to gaze every night upon the moon at a certain time, and thus en-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

deavour to cheat absence! Your idea is a still better one, because it is prompted by a sentiment more tender and true.

My dearest, do not try to get others to adopt your principles. Let tolerance be your religion always. You may well have caught it from me, that inability to listen calmly to false reasoning, but it is a great defect. I have made more than one enemy by my impatience, and have wasted my lungs in my endeavours to force sense into the minds of blockheads, honour into the creed of rogues. Do not follow my evil example. As I have already told you, generally speaking, women have no character: they are charming shrubs, made to blossom into flower; seldom do they bear fruit; and their quality depends entirely on their grafting, which is rarely good; for we must not suppose that our sex is more worthy than your own. There are few who are strong enough to entertain my ideas of reserve and chastity in their amours, whether we call it prudence or give it another name: perhaps it is just as well that love is so combustible a substance that if kept in check it is only the more likely to burst out more fiercely into flame. We are our universe, dear Sophie; no wonder we have a language peculiar to ourselves. Others cannot understand our transports. We have this advantage over them, that we can picture their pleasures easily enough; they are but a subordinate part of our own. There is no branch of a tree but it shelters, this month of the year, several pairs of lovers of this kind. We will leave them

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

their preference for a love that is no love. They are more discreet in their amours, and suffer less, so it appears. They are blind men and women who deny the purple bloom upon the rose, because they cannot see it, and in touching the rose they only feel her thorns. You say you know a dear good lady who maintains that a lover who is really in love is a hateful thing, because he is very much in the way, and sure to be of a jealous and coming-on disposition! because, forsooth, he cannot conceal his passion, and she has fears for her 'precious reputation.' When you meet with reasoning such as this, stand by it; agree with the arguments put forth. You may take my word for it that one man is seldom worth two; and that therefore a lover has no right to lay claim to moments which he cannot properly employ. You will soon see whither this reasoning tends, and how the present-day morality of love is formed upon it. If a man is seldom worth two, never is he worth four, still less thirty. Heaven rarely works miracles, even to please the devout: the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak: accidents, disturbances, fortuitous cases, and so on, have to be met; resource is needful; the more resourceful one is, the less does the public notice it. But inasmuch as the other sex would certainly not be sufficiently numerous to accommodate them, if all women were alike, you must beg these ladies to be patient, tolerant: it is to their interest to be so. Let them leave the tender women, romantic or stupid as it may please them to term them, who have desires but for a single object, because their

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

hearts are only touched by a single object, let them leave these women, say I, whose souls are ever in accord with their senses, to be the dupes of their own peculiar passion, and limit themselves to their one lover. Such is the treaty you ought to make with them, my Sophie, instead of preaching at them.

Soul of my existence, would that this letter might restore you to serenity, and that you might soon be allowed to send me one to reassure me as to the state of your spirit, the state of your heart. Dear child, are you so very miserable? Alas! You know that I feel our state at least as much as you do, but square your shoulders to the trials and mortifications inseparable from our position. Are you dependent on the caprice, the insolence, the garrulity of one of those women whom you have as your companions? Surely not. I have heard all manner of good concerning those under whose direction you have been placed. Assuredly it cannot be difficult for them to appreciate you or assign to you your proper place. I conjure you, my love! show a braver spirit; you have so brave a soul! Would you be as I, whose strength stands the test of great occasions and yet whom the most trifling annoyances put out in a ridiculous fashion. O Sophie! Thou art so sweet! so kind! so equable! so good! woe to those who cannot live with thee; but trouble not thyself about the foolishness of others. Alas! our misery suffices us; do not let us aggravate it by consideration of those nothings which are only worthy of our contempt.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

If you obtain permission for me to send you one or two of my manuscripts, I will let you have them; there are some that I cannot let go out of my hands. Those of my works of which I think least ill, and which may perhaps be of some use, I propose to dedicate to our benefactor, if ever I am able to publish them. As for Tibullus and Homer, I shall not go on with them unless I can let you have a look at them; for translation is at best but a painful and an ungrateful task. Before all the vigour of youth is expended, I ought at least to endeavour to show the world what I might have done. For the rest, I assure you that my style has grown leaden and my talent depreciates in proportion as my taste becomes more exacting; this in itself is no mean torment.

My Sophie-Gabriel, I would that you could assure me that you have no fresh troubles! I want to find in your next letter (you see that I count on the goodness of him to whom we owe so much) that something, I know not what, that is wanting in this one, and makes me anxious about the state of your soul. Alas! you cannot but be sad; but, my Sophie, ought not your sadness to be a shade less bitter when you are writing to your Gabriel? Farewell, my happiness, my blessing, my life! I shall not write more to-day; not that I have received the same injunction that you have (and I trust that the very simplicity of my letters may disarm all objection) but because the messenger is waiting and I do not want to delay him; I have asked him of his mercy to let you have this before the end of the

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

month. A few moments still remain, which I ought, from all points of view, to sacrifice to him whose kindness is our one resource, and the sole basis on which we found our hope. Farewell, my beloved. I can only say thus, drily, farewell; for it is at the end of my letters especially that I am afraid of myself. Send me every detail of news; be sure to take plenty of exercise: give me, too, details of our daughter's health. You have made me almost anxious about your eyes: but apparently you would have told me had it been anything serious. Sophie, Sophie, no reticence on all that concerns your health. *Addio, mio ben! la mia salute, e la mia vita. Addio,* GABRIEL.

Read the chorus of the second act of Pastor Fido: there are in it things that ought to come at the end of this letter. Remember, please, that if your daughter is to be shaved, it must be done by a surgeon: the suture of the cranium has not yet closed up for one thing; for another, babies are so very restless.

XXII

Dear love, why have I not a thousand lives to lay at your feet, why can I not, why can I not, alas, at least see you once more! My eyes would tell you what I can ne'er express. . . . Sophie-Gabriel! I have two, now, then? yes, two: they share my caresses, and almost my love. O delightful intention! Ah! this gift of the heart, this dear pledge

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

of your love, with what feelings of gratitude I contemplate it! O adored Sophie! what is the whole universe to me in comparison with my dear one and my daughter? Idols of my heart, you in whom all the powers of my soul are concentrated; ah! when, when may I press you both to my heart in close embrace?

I have been in despair, O my Sophie! What, said I to myself, fifty-six days without a letter! O my patron! are these your kindnesses? Is this to be the outcome of our sighs? The tears of Sophie, which, more sweet than ambrosia, when bidden by love to flow, were gathered in so greedily by my burning lips; these tears, which, at the price of all the blood in my body, I would gladly drink or dry away, are they to flow in vain? . . . M. de R. came to my room this morning, with a picture beneath his arm: my heart beat wildly: I guessed, ah! yes, I guessed that it was for me, but I hardly dared believe it; and when I saw it, this image of your other self, when the letter, all of love, that accompanied it was given to me, I almost lost my reason and my senses. . . . Thank you, thank you, O Sophie, O my tender-hearted love! for the portrait, for the hair, for your letter. So you have seen your child? You have pressed her to your heart? You have spoken to her of her father? Alas! she could not understand you; but I have gone halves with you in all your kisses: never have you loved me so well as you do now. . . . O my daughter, my beloved daughter, if you knew how I adore you, if you knew what it is to me, to have a daughter of your

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

mother! I thought I knew the meaning of paternal love . . . fool that I was! And you say your Gabriel has no pleasures; ah! your sweetest pleasure is denied me, certainly; that of giving such charming surprises to those I love.—Yes, in truth, she does resemble me; yes, she has the round, I might almost say the puffy face I once had; it has grown very much longer during my sojourn here. She has those deep-set eyes that, on my honour, I could not call *fine*, were you to stand over me with a whip; but they will indicate well enough, sometimes perhaps too well, all that the soul that lies behind them feels. It is the mouth, I know not why, but it is the mouth that looks as if it would never utter anything but truth to those it loves and esteems. But the forehead, so characteristic a feature, perhaps the most important of all in a beautiful face, is yours; and the lower part of the face, which contributes so much to the general appearance, and which is more susceptible to grace and charm than any other part, is yours too, entirely yours. Your tenderness already breathes through the eyes that you have enlarged upon in order to make me lose my whole heart to the little person: they tell me how fondly I am loved; already they appeal straight to the heart. They are so sweet, so peaceful, so modest! They are your eyes, but, being so deep-set, they at first misled me. Her nose is already a roguish little nose; I cannot think where she gets it from. You have Roxelane's nose, but that is not your daughter's: mine is very like that of Solomon's

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

mistress, for hers was a nose like unto the tower that stood upon Mount Lebanon; and that, thank goodness, is not Gabriel-Sophie's nose, either! In short, she is pretty; far too pretty to resemble me: it is because you have given her just all that was wanted to counteract all she took from me. My dear love, she is another little Sophie; alas! that she is just Sophie, *tout court*; I hope she may appreciate the happiness of resembling you so closely! My darling's hair is very black for her age; I hope she will develop the same colour in her eyes, her eyebrows and her lashes, and that you will complete the picture by offering the relief of your own lovely colouring. Gabriel-Sophie is tall; the ordinary height for a new-born child is eighteen inches. During the first year it adds some six or seven to its stature, no more. She is only seven months and is twenty-three inches tall. I assure you this is very tall; herein, again, she resembles her mother.

.
You may be sure that I was taken with your advice about the pistol, as an expeditious and sure weapon; and yet I feel compelled to say something on the subject, for all that: it may be of use whatever happens, in the *natural* order of things, be it understood; for the kindness, the heavenly kindness of M. L. tends rather to make us forget any tragic plans we might otherwise be tempted to make. But, all the same, my Sophie-Gabriel, I am but mortal; the autumn leaf turns yellow and falls from the tree; the storm, too,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

destroys the spring leaves; everything in nature teaches man the necessity for resignation. I am in pretty good health at the moment: exercise has made me robust again: I am only twenty-eight, remember; and fond of life, since I adore you, and you cherish me: therefore I may for a few moments concentrate your attention on something that is very improbable, but still in the order of possibility. I know the extent of your love, of your courage, and even of your daring. I know that you live only in me and for me, that you have never for a moment considered the possibility of surviving me, and that the first movement you would make on hearing of my death would probably be fatal to you. But, my dearest, think of your child: think of the innocent picture that you now see beneath you. Your prison is not to be a lifelong prison, nor is your confinement to be of very long duration; mine gives me no hope of ever coming to an end. If premature death were to carry me off, I could do nothing for my child. Is this not all the more reason why you should take care of yourself for her sake? My sweet Sophie, would you leave the fruit of our love naked and helpless, to bear the buffets of an evil fate alone, to beg her bread and drag our blood through the mire of the most awful misery? Is she not my second self, this child, tenderest little mortal in all the world? No, my dearest; no, you must not leave her her father's misery as an heritage: you must keep watch and ward over her. You will honour your lover in your daughter, and bestow upon him

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

a title more sacred still, the holy one of father. To cherish my daughter would be to show yourself faithful to me: she will wipe your tears away, she will soften your loss, if she does not quite console you. I am saying just what I think: you are pledged to your child. If the scythe of death reap me down before my time, it seems to me I might depart with fewer regrets if I could leave with you this precious pledge of my love, if I could take away with me the hope that love for the daughter I have given you would make you bear my loss more easily, that my love would survive and be kindled afresh in the heart of my daughter, when Gabriel should be reduced to dust: his soul, transmitted to another self, brought to birth within your bosom, shall live again in spite of tyrants, and your friend will love you beyond the tomb. The love of your little child will brave death and time, time and death, under whose sway sooner or later all are brought; her love shall endure even as long as nature herself. If I have never before spoken thus to you, my dear and best beloved, it is because I have never thought for so long together, nor so seriously, nor so deeply on what may happen when I am no more, and on the duties that bind us one to the other. I have the right to acquit myself of oaths that I have made. I am not ill, I repeat, and this long letter will sufficiently prove the truth of what I say: I hope to live for your sake, for my daughter's sake and that of our kind benefactor. But if fate decides it otherwise, if my eyes are to close before they

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

have once again gazed upon my mistress, if my lips are to freeze before they have once again pledged my love, I hand down to your daughter all the love you know me capable of; may she enjoy it as well as nature will allow her; may a mother's love take that place in your heart that I have hitherto filled; may a daughter's love compensate you for your loss, as much as that is possible. The heart formed out of the union of Gabriel's heart and your own will not abandon your ardent soul to loneliness without just cause. The inanimate picture of Gabriel is so dear to you, O my dear beloved! Will not his living likeness be a thousand times more precious to you? Is it not the mingling of your blood and mine, of your soul and mine, that I offer as pasture for your love to feed upon? Do not tell me these are barren consolations, of little worth; you must admit that if it be a duty to preserve yourself for a poor little child who has but you in all the world, it is no cruel duty, no severe task which is allotted you. . . . You will weep as you read this; I too am weeping; but mine are not bitter tears, and these reflections form an important subject which I feel I ought to offer to you for meditation, that you may alter your principles a little. Do not try to put me out by making comparison with other cases; you would only hurt me; and there is nothing in the world to prevent your being to me all that I can ever be to you. . . . On the whole, I am well; I am willing to live to a hundred and one, provided it be by

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

your side, and to say, at that age: 'My daughter, go tell your daughter that the daughter of her daughter is crying.'

You have given me great pleasure in assuring me of the interest that those on whom you are dependent are taking in you. I thank them from the bottom of my heart for their kindness, albeit I am convinced that it should be impossible for decent people to treat you harshly, of all people. My gratitude is in this sense but a paltry homage; but it is certain that never can they do me greater kindness than by showing the same to you.

If they have intimated to you that I may send you certain manuscripts, let me know, and I will do it with the greatest pleasure, since you wish it; but do not let us take advantage of their complacency, nor encroach too far on the time of the secretary of M. L. N., who is obliged to examine all we write to one another. Believe me, we should do better to be satisfied with only a letter or two more; fifty-six days is a long time; since your confinement I have had one from you every month, and sometimes two; I may not always be so generously compensated for my long period of anxiety.

Farewell, my dearest, so tender, so thoughtful, so loving and so kind. May this letter give you but half the pleasure yours and your precious enclosures have given me! I end it; for, after all, the end must come, and M. B.—who is obliged to read it, may not find it as interesting as you do, in spite of his good intentions. I feel this, but '*amore non si sazia mai*. . . .' Oh! no, no, no, especially when it

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

hungers so bitterly after its object. '*Ama il tuo sposo, come ne sei amata.*'

GABRIEL.

I thought none of the name of Caunigham any longer existed. I am glad to hear that that poor child who was in such a hurry to get married has at last been settled in life. She never behaved badly with you; I like her as much as I can like any woman but Sophie, or one with so lukewarm a disposition. Pay strict attention to what I say to you about the care of Gabriel-Sophie's teeth. I shall send you some verses to put at the foot of the picture of this tall maiden of two feet.

Farewell once more; leave me to chat with my little daughter.

XXIII

So we owe him our lives twice over! Ah! yes, I protest, I swear that death would have been a hundred times dearer to us than another long period of silence, and the loss of all hope; and this man, whose heavenly kindness upholds us in the midst of the cruellest misfortune, would be doing less for us were he but to snatch us from our enemy's sword. . . . O Sophie, Sophie, I weep; but I breathe again. Sophie! you live, you love me! Ah! never for an instant have I suspected you: may the whole universe crumble into ruin, may Gabriel perish utterly before he ever suspects you! But my wandering imagination has strayed among the tortuous paths of possibility: every misery,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

even the crowning misery of all, rose before my eyes in turn. . . . You were weeping, Sophie . . . and I no longer wept; and my grief came very nigh to delirium. . . . Eighty days! . . . O soul of my existence! And the nights, you do not count the nights? . . . Those nights, those lonely, lonely nights, which seem so long to waking grief, those nights even now poison the remembrance of many delightful things. . . . Ah! Sophie, it is a quarter of a year that we have been separated. And who knows? . . . who knows? . . . But no: your letter lies before me; I hold it, touch it, revel in it: yes, my senses and my soul are in my eyes and on my lips; and your love, which is imprinted on the paper that it almost brings to life, weighs upon my heart and overwhelms it with a burden of desire.—Ah! how well you say it, in your magic words: ‘A letter dries many tears; and, if it causes them to flow, they are tears of tenderness.’ . . . But what you must have suffered, if you have ever for one instant thought ‘that this consolation was refused us for ever! . . . for ever! . . .’ Have you weighed those dreadful words?—Ah! Sophie, I have feared for your life, and I was less unhappy than you perhaps, knowing that I could not survive her I love; the news of her death had but to reach me, and I should be no more. But to be separated *for ever* would mean that one of us survived the other; far, far from Gabriel may such thoughts ever be! No, no, my Sophie-Gabriel, I cannot believe it possible. If it breathes in everything, this melancholy upon which all sensitive souls are nourished, never is it

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

found to conceal within its depths signs of an impotent despair: it is as sweet, as pathetic as yourself. . . . Alas! I, too, 'have to return it'; I cannot even burn it and swallow the ashes; but I have read it a hundred times or more, I have breathed its contents in, I have lapped them up as a cat laps milk: they are engraved on my heart in lines of fire, of unquenchable fire, immortal as my love.—Yes, yes, she is like me, my child, my little child whom I kiss hundreds and hundreds of times a day, while that serious look on her face never alters—it almost puts me out of patience. In all good faith, my Sophie, do I speak to her, ask her questions, complain to her for never answering me: the illusion lasts for hours together; at length I smile at myself and the next minute begin all over again. Absorbed in profound meditation, suddenly I am brought back to myself. What is the cause of this, I wonder, what, if not you yourself? . . . You are the distraction, if I may thus term an ever-present thought. I fly to your daughter, I cover her with kisses and with tears. . . . In the days of his happiness your Gabriel was just the same; overwhelmed with work, wearied with toil, he would rise up from the table over which he had been bent for days together, . . . he would throw himself into your arms. . . . A sigh, a look, *un bacio*; and his strength, his patience and his courage would be all revived, and the feeling of happiness would spread throughout his body, and waves of happiness would roll up and break over everything that lay around him, washing away

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

anxiety, and sad forebodings, tearing the thorns of life from the roses of love and watering them with their spray. Alas! alas! But to speak of the child again; yes, once more, she is like me; and I cannot think why you are so proud of it! But yet I know why. I once heard a woman, when she saw Le Kain in *Tancrède*, cry, 'How handsome he is!' Now no one in the world is uglier than Le Kain. I have always had a high opinion of that woman. She could have been no ordinary soul, such as those who find the true beauty of man in his sensibilities; for she must have had a knowledge of love and of the value of love. I conceive that you have often found me *handsome*; that I am even in your eyes the handsomest of men; for I am one of those who know well how to love my fellows. Admire my beauty, my darling, and let them laugh who will. But why calumniate my daughter's eyebrows? To judge by the very little light in them at present, they should be dark, and the hair is exceptionally dark for a child of her age; and I say she is pretty, pretty in every way. Ah! Sophie! she is far more than pretty; she is your daughter, and your soul shines already in her lovely eyes. It seems that you have 'some confused notion' that I possess the art of consolation. My dear lady, do not meddle with the affairs of Sophie *l'ainée*; . . . alas! of my sad and solitary household, she is the only one who can reconcile herself to your absence. . . .

O soul of my existence! To a large part of your letter (and the most touching part withal) I shall make no reply whatever, since you forbid it; yet I

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

should have plenty to say; but I trust that these gloomy discussions are fruitless, for I have not the least desire to die before my time. . . . Sophie! harassing and harrowing as is the picture of your sufferings, you will lose nothing by leaving it to the heart of your Gabriel to divine. Alas! out of such great happiness, what remains? We cannot even communicate our pains. Never, even in the most terrible times, have we experienced such bitter privations, for happily our wretchedness has been tempered by our kindly benefactor; separation is ever the most trying of all afflictions. . . . O my dearest! You find fault with my lugubrious reflections; but, tell me, what ought I to feel and think as I cast my eyes over that o'er-long succession of years that have sped, though I am yet scarce in my prime? Upon whatever portion of that time, made longer a hundred times by my misfortunes, I cast my eye, I see there ill-luck, disappointment, injustice, calumny and grief. Hardly can I make out a single year of real pleasure, and the short moments of respite are ever followed by countless, countless evil moments. I have witnessed the removal of my heart's treasure, the sole object of my love (I would say of my affections, were my mother, my daughter and M. Lenoir not alive), the sole object of my love, of my esteem, of my idolatry. I have brought unhappiness to her I love, or at least I have been the cause of unhappiness to her. All the misfortunes of my life, so true a presage, alas! of those that were yet to befall me, have been forgotten in the arms of love; but no sooner does

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

this consolation fail, than all my wounds are reopened. Was it not enough that I should suffer untold pains from my new wounds! Ah! yes, they are indeed the only ones impossible to quell. Never, with ills that affected not my love, have I lacked strength or courage; it has been a great source of irritation to my enemies, cowardly calumniators as they are, that they were forced to be content with slander, for conquer my spirit they could not! But these last misfortunes, which you have shared with me, have totally sapped my strength, my dear beloved! and but for the little kindnesses done to us by one whom I cannot name without tears springing to my eyes, I should go mad, or die. The wonder is I am not dead already. To suffer, to lose all, to be continually agitated, and very sorely agitated, to feel oneself deprived of joy and rest and peace of mind, to have no news of her to whom one's very life is bound, is that, I say, a state lightly to be borne? O my dear! Need you wonder that your Gabriel, that the poor wretch who has lost you, has none but sombre thoughts and painful feelings; that he has for long desired death as the only remedy for his ills? Ah! Sophie, it is in truth one of love's miracles that I can flash out with an occasional spark of gaiety in writing to you: the only antidote of that soul-destroying grief that took possession of me the moment I learnt that I must leave you, is the certainty of being loved, and it is my only joy in this dark hour. Yes, Sophie; yes, my all: abandoned by fortune, persecuted by fate, separated from one whom I adore, this thought

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

alone, that I have brought to birth a sincere passion, is a constant source of consolation to me, even of pleasure. What other man could have inspired a love so tender, so generous? It is a delight that not riches and high birth, not pride of intellect, not realised ambition, nor any other passion, could ever give. This pleasure of the heart is indeed unique, because it finds its cause within itself. He who has never been loved, has never known happiness. All other affections of the soul are interested affections. Such an one serves me for his own purposes, another flatters me; another names himself my friend, thinking it worth his while to do so: but love is accorded to me, for my sake only; it cannot be counterfeited, nor can it be feigned.

Ah! Sophie! Sophie! Keep watch over this blessing, keep watch over the only blessing your Gabriel asks. . . . Ah! could you ever forget your love for him, dear, tender Sophie? . . . Foolish one, to think you could ever again be loved as you are loved by him! Never again will you meet such ardour, such transport, such delicate feelings and inexpressible sentiments as those which now constitute your happiness. A heart attuned to such love cannot understand the language of another heart, nor could it make itself understood; or rather, the soul sullied by some horrible perfidy could never again experience a taste of real pleasure. . . . But avaunt, odious thoughts; they are an outrage on your feelings! O my love, a moment's thought dispels the gloomy cloud that hangs over

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

me, so often now, alas! I have had fears of returning to that dreadful state in which one is sure of nothing; when, weary of being unhappy and without any compensation for unhappiness, almost without hope, one calls on death to end it all. When a catastrophe is imminent, have you ever noticed how long seems the time that immediately precedes it? Is it that one longs for the blow to fall? Surely not. Rather is it that the feeling of expectancy is worse than the evil itself, whatever that evil may be. Once the blow has fallen, we know the worst: either it is heavier or less heavy than we thought; we bear it or we succumb. But the weight, the horrible dead weight of uncertainty, that enlarges everything, that multiplies possibilities, that gives reality to the veriest chimera, or makes chimeras of realities; that overwhelming weight can be likened to nothing else in all the world but torture. But we are now delivered of it; let us take heart once more, since our tutelary genius is so prescient, so powerful and so thoughtful for our welfare. Thanks, thanks be to him, and let us give him our confidence unstintingly. Alas! when I think of all he has done for us, I can but hope that in his case at least it is still true that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

You must expect to lose your hair after your confinement. I flatter myself that you will not waste the hair that falls from your head. Do not hesitate to have it cut, if need be; it is the only means of preventing its coming out. What does it matter if for a little time you become a plain

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

woman? For my part I have lost no end of hair; I know not what sort of providence it is that watches over the hair, but I do know that I have still plenty, although I have not attended to it in any way whatever except as to keep it very clean, to my mind an indispensable attention. Would my wise darling allow me to tell her that of all the ways of preserving the hair there is no surer way than that of washing it? Yes, madame, washing it; and that every day, or at least the chignon. The molly-coddles who are afraid of cold water and catch cold because they are not used to it, may use warm water. But be sure you dry it thoroughly afterwards. The hair, O venerable scholar! is like a plant, requiring exactly the same care in culture as a plant does; but it must be admitted that of all gardeners, hair-dressers are the worst, the most destructive. Let me never again hear, I beg of you, that you have two feet of curls on your head; I know no one less worthy of being made a laughing-stock than my Sophie. As for your eyes, I am a little anxious about them: your sight is excellent, wonderfully good; but it is delicate, because your lashes are so thin. Do not work in the full glare of the sun; choose rather a shady spot: a dim light may tire your eyes, but a bright light will certainly injure them. I implore you to abjure all remedies, so-called, whether they be old-wives' cures or not; the eyes are too precious to allow of one's taking liberties with them. Nurse your strength; refresh the eyes with a lotion of brandy and water, nothing else. . . . Farewell, my dear, my Sophie, my witness,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

my judge, my love; *mio ben, mia sposa, vita mia, addio.* GABRIEL.

My Gabriel-Sophie, that cowardly Ovid who dared to write an Art of Love, rendered homage to Augustus, his tyrant and persecutor; all his writings, in which the question of love is constantly introduced, bear the signs of the intellect and the intellect alone; very few of his verses appeal to the heart; a man without courage is a cold-hearted lover: *Un mal sicuro amico, è freddo amante.* It is worthier, far, for us to sing of the kindnesses that fall from love's hands. Get M. Lenoir to buy you an engraving of himself and hang it in your room: you would not do it without my sanction, but I order you to, and I know you will obey me willingly. Write at the bottom:

Son âme est bienfaisante et son cœur est sensible;

Son esprit vaste, actif, sa justice inflexible.

Magistrat révéré dans les temps orageux,

Lenoir sut allier la prudence au courage,

Les talents d'un ministre et les vertus d'un sage,

Un devoir trop sévère et des soins généreux.

L'épreuve des succès et de l'adversité

L'a rendu précieux et cher à sa patrie:

Il a su mériter et désarmer l'envie.

J'admire ses travaux; j'adore sa bonté.

(A feeble expression of the immortal gratitude of Sophie-Gabriel and his dear one.)

The ninth line is not my own; but it is so happy and so apposite that I insert it without hesitation,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

especially as it was written for M. Lenoir. I wanted to execute an allegoric design of some sort; but it has proved too hard a task for me; I am not sufficiently at ease to devote myself to it. If the likeness is good, you might send me a copy. M. Boucher would surely be kind enough to tell you where to find the best.

Sophie, each of my pages contains about 72 lines, each line about 25 to 30 words; each of your pages has 40 lines, and each of your lines about 14 words. Compare, and blush for shame! You have written me 2240 words in 80 days; that is, 28 words a day. What a stupendous effort! And your eyes are tired, too! Ah! Sophie, no more 80 days' silences, I pray.

XXIV

November 1778.

Ah! what a mystic charm is that of love, that can change things, places, circumstances, ideas and even sensations so entirely! In the midst of the most racking pain, in a position the most hopeless, love distracts me, intoxicates me with its illusions, illusions, alas! only too quickly sped, illusions that I am weak enough to regret. Your letter found me in profound depression of spirits and very poor health; it has restored a little of my strength and energy. Ah! Sophie, do not reproach me for giving way; such a state of collapse is in reality foreign to my nature. Alas! my spirit once so brave, my spirit full of your

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

dear self, is broken. I have fought against fate perhaps more than mortal should; it is inexorable; my strength is spent, I have no more of that priceless courage that comes from self-respect. Overwhelmed with grief, with pain, fatigue and fear, seeing around me nothing, absolutely nothing with which to fill the awful gap made in my life by your absence, I may perhaps feel proud that I have not hitherto forgotten what is due to myself. But what wonder if I at length become timid and weak? Extreme misery, without compensation, without respite, is it not enough to unman even the bravest heart? . . . But no: I shall lose, in this terrible captivity, no more than the few feeble talents that I brought with me to my prison, and perhaps my life, the least of all gifts that I have to lose. My head is growing weak: my imagination is wearing out: my mind is becoming idle; it has lost its flexibility already. But up to a certain point I venture to think my strength will not fail me, even now; I will never yield to adversity, like a coward; I will not beg favours of those whom I despise. I have but one refuge in my trouble, our kind patron: I have but one friend, one lover, one sister, one bride; in you are these sacred titles all united. Love, gratitude, honour, are my gods; I shall not offer up incense at any but at their altars. I have tried everything, except the things that are vile, and tried in vain. I am stranded on a rock. A horrible load of misfortune weighs me down; my eyes are gone; I am threatened with cataract: for the rest of my sojourn here, however

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

short it may be, I shall be blind. God! What a fate! I shall be as nothing, condemned to vegetate in a state of the most profound inertia, useless to others, a burden to them and to myself, hateful in my own eyes; such the state to which I am reduced. The satisfaction of giving the lie to my cowardly, my traitorous calumniators by my successes, my active virtues, is even denied me: they will soon reap what they have sown for ten long years . . . and then, and not till then, will they rest content.

The news of my child is charming. I should not like her to be too fat: but it is a defect not often contracted by babies brought up by wet-nurses. Do not let her be weaned, if you can help it, before most of her teeth are through. You give way with so good a grace in the matter of clothing, that I cannot find it in me to chaff you about it any more; but as I know how easy it is for me to influence you, and as the matter is so important, I want particularly to convince you. As you certainly have no very definite idea of the dangers of whale-bone bodices, I have thought again over what I told you about them, which may have appeared to you exaggerated, because I chose to say it jokingly; I want, dear love, to base my principles on an indestructible foundation, and to show you that I am still very far from having told you everything. I have none of my extracts by me, nor any book on anatomy, and it is long since I lost sight of matters that I never really studied except

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

in their general relation to the physique of the human body.

Yes, my Sophie, yes; we are loved by our children if we are worthy of them. The earliest bond of nature is formed in the bosom of the family. But what is it that ties the knot? The conformity of the training received by the children, as a rule, and the resulting resemblance in their sentiments, the communication of interests, secrets and aspirations. Feelings of gratitude for benefits received, and habit, certainly contribute more towards the fixing of such a tie than Nature herself. The names of brother and sister would be but empty words were it not for the civil relations they imply, and those of father and child would mean very little: for ties of blood alone are often uncertain and always involuntary bonds. But if, so far from concurring in this union of interests, this reciprocity of sentiment, everything tends to destroy it; if one finds among one's own people only hatred or coldness, irritation or open persecution, indifference or tyranny; then, I ask in all sincerity, does the chance that brings to birth a human being from the union of a woman and a man impose upon that being a certain number of duties? Does he owe unquestioning devotion to the mother because, in a moment of pleasure, she made fruitful the seed which the father thrust within her womb? When we no longer allow ourselves to be taken in by high-sounding words, when we no longer take on trust grandiloquent maxims about filial and parental

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

duty, we shall assign their just value to all those sayings with which the ears of our childhood are deafened. Those who preach this morality have ulterior motives for persuading us to adopt it! They speak to us without ceasing about our *duties*, never about our *rights*. Now there are, properly speaking, no duties without rights, no rights without duties: and moreover, a thoughtful being cannot for long be taken in. The great bond uniting mankind is that of kindness, and its name is *love*. I owe everything to my Sophie, because she has done everything for me; I cherish her, because my happiness was and ever will be her care: we owe all to M. Lenoir, because, with one exception, it is he who has procured us the greatest blessings; but we do not love, nor ought we to love those who have done us harm, or who have wrapped themselves up in their indolence when they might have helped us. Let us put a very simple question to these pulpit-orators. If by a chance, within the realms of possibility, I discovered that, in consequence of certain circumstances of which I had hitherto been in ignorance, I was the son of M. and of Madame de R., and that it was demonstrated to me that I was the fruit of their chaste loves; should I owe them greater affection than I do to-day? Would it be possible for me to exchange the feelings of resentment that I now have for feelings of tenderness and filial devotion? Do you hesitate in your reply for a single moment? Surely not. For myself, I am of the opinion (and hereby pronounce my fate, if ever I prove a bad father), I am of the

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

opinion, I say, that it is the kindnesses we receive at the hands of our parents, and those kindnesses alone, that impose duties of love and of gratitude upon us. Without reciprocity of sentiment, without interchange of service and of gratitude, the words father, mother, brother, sister, are but idle words: the lips alone utter these arbitrary sounds, which have no claim to affect or interest the heart. I have by me a manuscript work which will probably never see the light in my lifetime, but which may perhaps be known to posterity. It ends with these touching words, which are the profession of my faith concerning a father's rights and duties: 'And you, my son, whom I have never once embraced since you lay in your cradle, you whose lips I moistened with my tears on the day I was arrested, with a tightening at the heart that told me I should never see you more: I have but little call on your affection, since I have contributed nothing towards your happiness or your upbringing. I was deprived of pleasures such as these, the father's prerogative; and you can never know whether I should have made a good father or not; but you owe it to yourself and you will owe it to your children to respect my memory. When you read this, I shall probably be no more; but you will find in this book what in me was worthy of esteem, my love of truth and justice, my hatred for adulation and tyranny. O my son! beware of the sins of your father; may they serve as a lesson to you throughout your life: beware of those excesses of passion which were his happiness and also his misfortune, and of

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

which he has doubtless sown the seed in your blood; but imitate his courage; wage everlasting war against the arch-enemy, despotism. Ah! if ever you prove capable of flattering a tyrant, invoking his aid or serving in his ranks, may death gather you in before your time of harvest! . . . Yes, it is with firm voice and unfaltering heart that I utter so terrible a warning. . . . My child, love your duties, love your fellow-citizens, love your equals, love if you would be loved: it is this sentiment alone that renders man capable of true and lasting joy; it is the antidote of all devouring passion and the sole remedy for the despair of seeing oneself falling a victim to the onslaughts of time. . . . Is it necessary to lay down laws of love for those to whom one has given life? Guide them by the reins of affection, if you would have their souls respond to your own. Never forget this, my son, that you have rights over them only in proportion to your duties to them, and the manner in which you have fulfilled those duties; never forget that you would be an unnatural monster if you were more severe towards them than the law, for in all cases the law prescribes arbitrarily: if you would have them grow up to be a source of happiness to you, give up your life to theirs; may you be more fortunate than your father.'

You have often said to me that you were lamentably ignorant of ancient mythology: all our mythologists would bore you; and I should not bore you, though I were as wearisome as they. I have written

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

you a book the substance of which you would only find in some two or three hundred volumes. It is meant for you, in the first place, and afterwards, for the education of your daughter; rather strong philosophy perhaps, but not beyond your grasp. Implore, demand, move heaven and earth that I may send it to you in parts. We moderns, who are almost always imitators, and too often compelled to be imitators, introduce into our poetry, our pictures, our statues, the gods and fables of the ancients; it is essential that you should have a knowledge of their mythology. You have read much and have a marvellous memory; but having neither guide nor method, you do not know all that you ought to know; and, what is rare at your age, and especially with your sex, your attentions have been directed rather towards the more serious studies than to lighter literature, a fact that proves the power of your mind and the strength of your character. In the few short moments of happiness allotted to us by destiny, I was too much occupied with unavoidable tasks to watch over your reading. I can now, at any rate, compensate for such a loss, which is, alas, irreparable, and I shall take care to put you in the way of directing the studies of my Gabriel-Sophie, so long as my eyes and my life are spared to me. Endeavour to obtain this work I speak of; it will afford you many precious moments in the company of the ancients. The history of antiquity gives us examples of men of another nature from our own; it presents us with a religion vastly preferable to our modern

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

theology, which is as sombre, fanatic and coarse as its inventors; it offers us another world in which we may wander at our own sweet will. It was in those days that enthusiasm was at once the food of genius and of passion; it was then that vigour, energy, vehemence, depth of sentiment and of idea were allied with harmony, elegance, and a delicacy of expression that bespoke a tongue melodious, rich, abundant, flexible and varied, such, in short, as only a lively imagination and a mind fully sensitive to happy impressions could invent. It was then that beauty, love, liberty and virtue were a cult in themselves, and shone in all their glory. It is from those days that our greatest poets derive subjects for their verse, such noble subjects as enable them to rival their masters in the art; from those days that our mediocrity can still strike a spark of that divine fire that discovered so many geniuses and bequeathed so brilliant a dynasty to the arts.

Let your mind be at ease, my dearest love: I am as sure of your constancy and faithfulness as I am of my own; but beware of confusing the two things. There are more constant lovers than faithful lovers, because man seldom loves so fondly that the object of his love, who presides over his feelings and keeps them in check, is ever present in his mind—that object that renders our hearts and our senses alike inaccessible to all kinds of seduction. A man is constant because he is a gentleman; or from habit, or sympathy, or conformity of tastes, interests or temper; but he is only faithful to his mistress because he loves her, passionately loves

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

her. Constancy is the virtue of friends; faithfulness the virtue of lovers, and they have the advantage; for faithfulness always implies constancy, and constancy is not always a certain pledge of faithfulness. But neither is faithfulness an ungrateful virtue: it repays us for our sacrifices. Ah! who knows that better than my loving and generous darling?—*Addio, cara sposa; addio, ben mio: colgo d'amor la rosa, sopra il tuo core. Addio.* Send me full details concerning your health, and above all of your palpitations, and tell me all the doctor has said about them. Nurse your cold; but do not shut yourself in too much. Does the milk give you no more trouble? *Addio: ricevi e pianto, e sospir tronchi, e molti baci e la mia amina sopra i tuoi labbri.* GABRIEL.

As for the traitors, your all-sufficient defence is that in your despair you have tried every other resource.

XXV

December 1st, 1778.

O thou who sharest all my pains and art the source of all my pleasures! Thou who feelest my ills more keenly than all the ills I have caused thee, O Sophie, generous and tender-hearted love! How thy lips burn with love! and how heavy is thy heart with sorrow! It is my fault, O adored Sophie! I let my pen run on far too imprudently,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

allowing it to show marks of ill-temper and of an anxiety such as only captivity can cause. May be that in a moment of suffering I exaggerated. My health is sadly altered, I admit; but I am far from being threatened with complete breakdown; and it is probable that recovered liberty would remove all trace of the evil. It is true my eyes are very seriously affected, and I can never hope completely to regain full use of them; but once I am away from here, I shall have every chance of nursing them back to health. I could dictate; I could get someone to read to me; I could work less; but even here, within my prison, I am far from blind. In a word, your Gabriel is ailing: alas! how could he fail to be, away from you? but he is by no means in desperate straits either physically or morally. I might even add, and I do so in all sincerity, that, although I feel ill at this moment and am about to take an emetic, my soul is more at peace than it has been for the last eighteen months. I have seen our noble patron: he does not weary of well-doing, he wants to do even more than he is able. He succeeds in embellishing his favours with all those charms of which true feeling alone knows the secret. He has spoken to me at great length about my daughter; he has rendered her a service which may prove of vast importance to her. I refrain from explaining further, for I know not whether I ought; but I beg and pray him who shall read this letter before it gets to you, and to whom, in truth, we also owe a great deal, to supplement my silence, if he can.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

I do at length seem to see certain gleams of light in the far distance, flickering gleams, it is true, but still I see them, athwart the gloom in which fate has enveloped my existence. Without entering into further detail, I may at least tell you that you may count on our noble protector; he will not abandon us. May we but live long enough to express, nay, prove to him our heartfelt, our immortal gratitude, and may no one ever suspect us, in the least degree, of exaggeration or of self-interestedness. Take heart, my Sophie! I say, take heart: calm your troubled spirit, O bride of my heart! we are not destined to drain to the dregs the cup of misfortune. It is a triumph in itself that my cowardly and barbarous enemies, whom I have so much right to despise, have not succeeded, nor ever will succeed, in making me appear base in my own eyes. When we look within, and find honour riding above all our errors, all our faults, we are not without consolation nor a certain strength to uphold us: I think myself worthy of a better lot, and I even dare to foresee it. I shall not die in irons, my Sophie-Gabriel! I shall die a free man whatever happens, free in the feelings of my heart and the unchangeable constancy of my will; but I shall live for you, and near you; and when we know happiness once more, when your heart has felt mine beating against it, when the time comes for us to flutter from the tree of life like an autumn leaf, we shall have earned the regrets of all brave men and the tears of all feeling men; and some fond lover, knowing

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

of our love and our faithfulness, will cover our tomb with flowers, and write upon it the words: 'Un Même Amour, Une Même Cendre.' And you who know my heart so well, and my way of writing a letter, will see from these few words that I am comforted; yet I have just received another shock, which I ought not to keep from you; let me say first that its effects are over, and if you shed a tear love will dry it. My son, that son of whom you have so often spoken so kindly and so lovingly, is dead. I now cling to life for your sake alone in all the world, and that second you whom you have just brought into the world. . . . Sophie, that idea too has its consolations! Take care of my daughter for me: may she never be punished for being so dear to me. Take care of her for me; that the little of happiness still remaining to me may not be poisoned. The child has many storms to brave. She has been born in grief; but she was conceived in felicity. Alas! my son had withstood the early accidents of childhood: he bid fair to live many years, perhaps many fortunate years; for his father would have been kind to him and loved him well. Ah! yes, that would he, and, to defend him against those who loved him not, would he have displayed force, audacity and resource such as he would never have developed by himself. He is no more, this child whom I had not embraced since he was in his cradle; but he was, as you know, always in my mind, even in the midst of the allurements of passionate love. I too could say: 'O my son! how much have you not cost your father!' He is no

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

more, and all that I have learnt from him is his death. And yet only two months ago M. Lenoir brought me good news of him, news which he acquired in rather a strange manner. The ray of joy that penetrated to my soul on hearing that all was well with him left me more susceptible to the blow that has now fallen. Ah! Sophie, I have found that one has always strength enough left for a little more suffering. But, and this you alone will perhaps understand, as I think over his death my feeling of loss is lessened, not increased. Oh! if it cost me no less than two-thirds of my fortune to be quit of certain individuals, how lucky should I count myself! A hundred thousand a year would not cost me a sigh nor a single regret. . . . And could I only, at the cost of what remains, see my son once more! Sophie, I know not how all this may end; but I do believe that, whatever snare is set for you, something will save you from falling into it. Remember, O my best beloved, to your dying day, that your Gabriel will never fail either you or himself, and that if he is compelled to sacrifice his life to the faith that is in him he will count himself a happy and an honoured man.

I see that I have not sown in barren soil. There are people who, by their nature, cannot talk; but when these people have souls, their silence is expressive and their innuendoes often most eloquent. Dear love, even in such awful misery as ours, we seem to have found many compensations. Do not let yourself be cast down, O Sophie of my

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

heart! The more I reflect on your noble character, on your sensibilities, the more I expect, nay, exact from you and your high courage. I have never, it is true, met the woman or the man capable of again and again resisting attacks of misfortune and humiliation. Women especially, when they think themselves humiliated, are completely cast down, and their overthrow penetrates even to the soul: but my Sophie, my Sophie-Gabriel, my love, my treasure, my good, is not a woman. She who has placed all her hopes in the strength and constancy of a passion such as ours, which has stood the test of time, of misfortune and of persecution, and which grows with the afflictions of the beloved, she, I say, is not capable of thinking herself humiliated by injustice, nor of yielding to tyranny. I know, only too well do I know that though sadness softens our hearts, it as often unnerves us, and that an afflicted soul has but little strength; but it is not in its dominant passion that it can ever fail. My dearest love, never forget that we have found in our own case that energy and resolution are capable of overcoming every difficulty, through the very hardihood that tests them, while slothfulness and faint-heartedness, that draws back at the sight of pain, misfortune and danger, do in truth create the difficulties they dread. Circumstances have lately proved the validity of this saying; he who has not the courage to take them as they come will certainly never profit by his opportunities. O my love! I say with you that when one has loved as we love, it is impossible to renounce that love: I say

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

it, not only because I feel it, but because inconstancy seems to my mind a thing inconceivable in passion such as ours. How touched I was by that naïve exclamation of yours, wrung from your all-loving heart: 'Ah! could we but live without loving!' No, no, my Sophie; your Gabriel is your surety. Love is the highest gift of the soul; but it is also an imperious need. It has increased our pleasures by mutual participation; it lessens our pains by dividing them. Ah! if ever . . . what a halcyon life it unfolds! The awful fears that now distress us, the bitter anxieties that have lacerated our hearts for so many an hour, the tempestuous days, the dreadful nights, will Love not turn them all to his own good uses? O Sophie! what compensations! what heavenly recompense! Will not the very memory of our sufferings, and our sacrifices, become itself, in the midst of all our happiness, one of our most exquisite pleasures? Oh! yes, yes: send me the hair-ring; they will surely let you; in case you have not enough hair, I venture to add a lock that has fallen from my own head! You will also please me very much, if it be not too costly, by having the last monogram I sent you engraved on steel, with all the ornamentation surrounding it, but without entablature; I wish it to rest against an antique pedestal. At the foot I would place a dog, crouching, with his leash on his back; and these words underneath the dog: '*Fin che vegna.*' You know what that means: 'Until the hour come'; and you may guess the emblem, when you have understood the device. They will pay you the

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

money it will cost you, and I know that you will not think that I add this for fear of being in your debt. It is now long since we shared our poor purses, but common to us both they will for ever remain. But I fancy yours must be very light. Mine is no less; but the little I have left could not procure me a greater pleasure. I am sending you a copy of '*Avis aux Hessoirs*' and '*Réponse à la lettre de la raison*.' You may keep the former, but please return me the latter, after you have made a copy; I have no other copy. I have seven or eight of '*Le Lecteur y mettra le titre*,' if you would like one. As for Ovid's '*Metamorphoses*,' translated with notes and commentary (a formidable task indeed!), I will send it you as fast as I can, but besides the fact that for the past month the poor state of my health and certain other circumstances have put me back, I must make a fresh copy of it, and that is a hundred times more wearying to me than the original work. But possess your soul in patience; I shall endeavour to send you a first instalment with my next letter, if they will let me.

I implore you once more not to neglect the palpitations from which you suffer from time to time. Ah, Sophie! take good care of your health; it is the third of all our earthly blessings. With love, liberty and good health man can be always, always happy. You reassure me somewhat by the description of your symptoms; from what you say, you are suffering not from any heart trouble but from nervous debility. Take plenty of gentle exercise and regular and healthy meals. From three to four

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

in the afternoon M. Gabriel now takes a walk, besides *il spacio* of eight to nine in the morning; profit by his example.

Do you know that you are becoming a naughty child, Madame Sophie? That you could make a dry joke yourself or laugh over some pleasantry, I have known for a long time, but I have never before known you so caustic. Next to love, I think indignation sharpens the wits most wonderfully. Farewell, my tender love, my beautiful, my dear; a letter would do me a deal of good, and a kiss a thousand times more. Alas! no: a kiss from her I adore, a kiss so long desired, so long awaited, following privations so cruel, such a kiss would send me mad; it would deprive me of my reason, if it did not kill me outright. . . . O Sophie! you alone give me life, take it away and restore it; write me that your heart has found relief, your mind peace, that your health is improved, your tears no longer flow; and never, never forget that whoever he may be who has uttered or ever may utter that awful blasphemy that made me shudder as I read it in your letter, 'that Sophie has been or will one day be abandoned by her lover,' is and ever will be an abominable calumniator, who justly deserves the hatred that I hope you will bestow upon him. Gabriel is your friend, your lover, *tuo sposo*. His fortune is yours; his heart is yours: his life is yours; and he finds no merit in it whatever, for the first need of his being is to adore you.

GABRIEL,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

You may be somewhat surprised at this fifth page; but what can I do? My good angel (for I have a familiar spirit, and I assure you that he looks well after our interests; and I think, you rogue, that you know it better than I), my good angel, then, has whispered low in my ear that I shall ruin my eyesight if I write so small and that it is no good trying to economise paper to that extent; and I, who am no business man, forsooth, have begun a fifth page, *because* I have written such clear round hand in order not to tire my angel's eyes. How witty that '*because*'! and I may as well another time become still more emancipated and *finish* the fifth page! Yet we must not take advantage of the good angel's kindness, for it rests with her alone whether she remains a kindly spirit or not. But lovers are so greedy! and the good angel has a countenance that inspires such confidence! . . . My Sophie, I implore you to let your daughter have a different writing-master from your own.

Why are you getting thinner? I don't want that. Do you sleep well? I want always, always, always to know all, the exact truth about all concerning your health and our daughter's. I have received your charming purse, which I press every day to my heart. I enclose a page of the erotic poetry that had been left out; I have indicated where it should be inserted.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

XXVI

December 29th, 1778.

My Sophie, I do not at all like the vague and flippant style in which you allude to your health. You have been ill and you are ill; you have had fever following a very grave crisis; you have been bled (a very good thing) and you joke about it, without letting me have any details! Sophie, I am not satisfied. You know what my imagination is, an all too ardent accompaniment of an extremely sensible heart; you know that your health is more important to me than anything else in the world, and causes me more anxiety: you know or you ought to know that my somewhat lengthy excursions into medicine only serve to multiply my anxieties and render them more acute; and you neither tell me what ails you, nor what the doctor says ails you, nor what he proposes to do, nor to what he attributes your indisposition. Is it a result of the palpitations? Are they better or worse? Have you any other symptoms? Is it from your lover, your husband, that you ought to conceal all these things, when you are ill? . . . A third party reads your letters. . . . And what does that matter? He is a wise, a prudent man, and a married man into the bargain: he knows our history. He is aware of our love for one another, and if he did not approve, he would not let us write; he takes an interest in us, or at any rate is at some pains to

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

prove it: what have you to fear from him? You cannot think what suffering you cause me; you would be severely punished if you had to bear it yourself. . . . But *I* spoke lightly about my health, you say. . . . In the first place, I never did: I spoke if anything too seriously; and in the second, that is quite another matter. The illnesses of your sex are very different from our indispositions. Had I a serious malady it would be impossible for me to write at such length as I do about my health. With me it is only a matter of the ruin of my general health, in which I have to record the variations as one would the readings of a thermometer: moreover it is very easily understood, and less disturbing in consequence, that I should be in indifferent health: in the first place I have been accustomed to a life which could hardly have been more active, and I have only counteracted the effect of my prodigious study (a régime that invariably tends to ill-health) by a judicious mixture of exercise and work: my actual position is therefore directly opposed to nature; in the second place you are fortunate enough not to feel the celibate state a burden to you, and you can tell whether I can say as much of myself. It is one of the advantages of a temperament such as yours which is absolutely denied me; in the third place mental affliction has always a thousand times greater an effect upon my constitution than physical: another inconvenient attribute of my nature; in the fourth place I have abused my strength and the powers of my youth. I have

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

given myself up to excesses of all kinds, licentiousness alone excepted; even there I have not denied myself some of its pleasures. I have only been good since I knew you. Behold then reason upon reason to account for the derangement of my health; they may reassure you somewhat, because, were the majority of causes to cease, the effects would also cease. As opposed to all this, you are a very young woman, with the best possible constitution: for more than twenty years you have as yet taken nothing from the source of life: you are accustomed to a sedentary life: you belong to the sex that has less need of exercise, you can take more than I can, you work less hard, you have more distractions than I. What reason then have I for counting on your health! The fang of sorrow doubtless bites into your flesh as into mine; but it has far more to bite upon in your case before it attacks a vital part. My Sophie, I give you my word that I will tell you all you ought to know about my health; but I know what is essential, and you do not. Tell me then everything, absolutely everything, relating to your own, in the most minute detail, or you will kill me. In truth, my burden is heavy enough; do not add to it, O my dear, dear love! and remember that we go for ages without hearing from one another. I am not in any way worse; on the contrary, the acute choking fits are over. For several days I almost fainted for lack of breath, and my heart beat so violently that I thought every minute would be my last. I have been cramming myself with orange-flower water

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

and drops of Hoffman; at last, when I developed a bad attack of nausea, from which I was suffering on the very day I wrote to you, I decided on a dose of ipecacuanha. The surgeon, who agreed that I ought to take it, told me he would fetch me some. In the meanwhile I brought up a lot of bile, which greatly relieved me; and as, besides a repugnance for violent methods, I had no great confidence in the hand that administers them, I would have no more of the emetic. The palpitations have nearly gone, the choking sensation altogether; but my digestion is still in a very poor state; for one thing my debilitated stomach absolutely refuses to do its work, and for another I eat far too quickly, being unable to endure the tedium of my solitary meals. It is certain that they will kill me if they keep me here; but there is still a margin of hope left. As for my eyes, they are considerably worse. There you have the truth: hard but exact. Be as frank with me and let nothing be kept back. . . .

. . . . Come, Sophie, I would beat you if I could, when you give the rein to your foolish fancies and say such ridiculous things. Have you the effrontery to compare my style with that of Rousseau—Rousseau, one of the greatest writers the world has ever seen, whose eloquence is always inspired, always most ingenious, and guided by a taste so exquisite, subject ever to the most severe criticism and correction, unless it be in his 'Héloïse,' in which he affects a negligent style? O Sophie! Sophie! where is

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

your reason, your tact, your justice? There are some excellent things in his 'Émile,' say you. What is there indeed that is not excellent? Perfect in arrangement, admirable in detail, magnificent in style, profound in reasoning, accurate in observation, original in the truths unfolded: that is Rousseau. Do you realise that you speak of one of the masterpieces of the age? Do you know that five or six of Voltaire's tragedies, a portion of his 'Henriade,' the 'Esprit des Lois,' Buffon's 'Natural History,' Raynal's 'Histoire des Deux Indes' and 'Émile' represent our claim to posterity for fame in letters? . . . And you compare a child to such a man, to a man as great in his virtues as he is in his genius! He had the admirable sagacity to commit nothing to paper until he had spent some thirty years in study; after that each one of his writings was an improvement on the last. And I, I who at twenty ventured to appear in print, what have I done? A badly written brochure containing some truths here and there, a few pictures, possibly too highly coloured, which reveal a lofty soul and a hot head; —I repeat it once again, the book is abominable; yes, Sophie, abominable; there is not enough detail for a book; it is just a tissue of fragments strung together at haphazard, replete with all the errors of the age at which I wrote; there is neither plan, nor form, accuracy, nor method in any of it. And behold my only title to fame; the rest lies in my portfolio, where it will probably remain. I know, my dear, good Sophie, what I might have done; I know it, because everyone is conscious of the

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

talent that is within him. I have doubtless an upright and a brave soul, animation perhaps, views of my own, and friends enough for a man who has never known a master. But, dear God! what a long way from the manly, profound, sublime creative genius of Rousseau! O Sophie! Sophie, you make me ashamed of myself. My style has absolutely nothing in common with his, although others besides you have thought they detected a likeness. My style is passable, because it is my own; because generally I adopt a tone peculiar to the thing I have to say or write about, while at the same time I only say or write what I think: therein lies the great secret of all writing, to my mind; to follow one's own character, the natural bent of the mind and the inspiration of the feelings. Oh yes, Sophie, never refuse to give play to the feelings. But my body and my head are giving way under the reiterated blows of fate. My flowers are withered; my fruit rotten before it is ripe. We must shed a tear over the laurels I might have won; an envious and pitiless tyrant has snatched them from me before I could pluck them; we must renounce them now, for they are far beyond my reach. I agree with you, my tender, loving Sophie, praise is great pleasure to your Gabriel, especially coming from the mouth of his love; but do not let exaggeration call a blush to my cheek; you may in that one particular try to deceive me. I am and always shall be far from thinking I deserve it; but it is so dear to me to know I stand well in the opinion of her

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

whom above all others I love and esteem the most! It may be that I shall pluck another fruit from her tree of praise. The charming homage, of which I am all unworthy, encourages me and urges me to acquire what I lack, to conquer my defects, perhaps more to justify your choice and preserve your respect than to do credit to myself in my own eyes. Alas! the unfortunate are always in doubt: all their conjectures seem to them realities; all that is possible seems to them probable, and they are too much given to attributing events they are at a loss to explain to coolness or negligence, especially on the part of those whose love and esteem are their only blessing, their only resource. Moreover, certain though I am that my incomparable Sophie will never vary in sentiment or in principle, yet her love is so necessary to my existence that it may well be permitted me at least to doubt whether I deserve the sacrifices she has made for me, and those she promises still to make, and closely to examine my sentiments, thoughts, conjectures, projects, occupations, and the little I think I am worth.

I leave you to 'Héloïse,' so long as you agree that the work, irregular, incorrect, perhaps ill conceived, and often slovenly as it is, yet sparkles with beautiful things; that it draws transports of admiration from us, and makes the gentle tears to flow. A hundred times I wished to criticise 'Héloïse,' a hundred times I wept, admired, read, re-read and pitied those who could find it in them, to be more critical than I. How basely did Voltaire,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

that Voltaire whose own genius placed him so far above envy, insult the most virtuous of men, from whom he had received nothing but praise,—a man unhappy, poor, persecuted, who never trespassed on Voltaire's own province, and who, let us venture to assert, was so far superior to him in his own! Voltaire, the immortal Voltaire, who, more than any other, perhaps, merited alike the admiration and the contempt of his contemporaries, was, in drama, a genius of the first order; in verse, a great poet; in the history of mankind, a phenomenon; but as a philosopher he often fell back on cheap witticism, whereas Rousseau, worthy of our highest respect by reason of his morality, his noble and unflinching courage, and the dignified nature of his works, is a very god of eloquence, an apostle of virtue, to which he always makes us turn in adoration; never did Rousseau prostitute his sublime talents to satire or to flattery.

Have you then, you great stupid, discovered that it is a mistake to make children learn fables by heart! Why I, your lover, after I have meditated for some hours on Bacon or Newton, open my *La Fontaine*, which I know by heart, and discover there each time fresh beauties that I have never noticed before. Such is the man whom you thought a fit instructor for children!

Thanks, thanks to yourself and to those who serve us so ably. . . . My daughter is well: I have your hair, your charming ring: I kiss them, suck them, eat them. . . . My love, my happiness, my life,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

my all! When, when shall I cease to love you more and more every day? I have this instant received the precious packet: ah! how my heart is beating! I reckoned on writing a little more . . . but leave me to gloat over my possession. *Addio, mio dolce sostegno. Addio, sposa amata, che a me sola par donna. Conservati fedele. Mia vita, ben mio, addio.* GABRIEL.

Sophie, ask for your New Year's gift; for I have asked so many times that I dare ask no more, for fear of angering the good angel to whom we should give volumes to read! Observe, naughty Sophie, that, in order to reassure you, I have got them to promise to remit my last letter to you immediately; and here have I been waiting four and twenty hours for yours. O ungrateful one! What debts you will have to pay me!

Your rings smell of amber. It is horrid for the nerves, and, moreover, quite superfluous for a widow. I absolutely forbid you to use it. Take care of your health and tell me everything, everything. . . . Silence, while I kiss my rings, your letter and my daughter!

XXVII

My Sophie! my poor, ignorant Sophie! scoff at my algebra and your geometry once again! With your sweet and tender phrases, you think to turn all heads, as you have turned mine. . . . Ah! no, no: these gentlemen up above (or rather down

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

below, for alas! I am lodged far higher up than they are) are well accustomed to the cajoleries of beautiful women: your *ange*, *bon ange* or nothing, mark you, it is all the same. But I, I the wiseacre, yes *I*, madame, I write: 'From 1778 to 1779 is incontestably one year; therefore I have not received any letters for a year. . . .' The celestial hierarchy, having at its fingers' ends the science of transcendental geometry, immediately appoints a referee for my petition: and the next day I receive a letter closely resembling Egyptian hieroglyphics or a Sunday notice, but my head succeeds in making it out and it does my heart good and I am happy, content. I kiss my treasure and I thank the celestial messenger. . . . But bear well in mind, my poor Sophie, that, of all the angels and archangels of heaven, there is only Gabriel who is gallant and upon all the others your charms, your kindnesses are lost.—So you are well, dear love; you say you are, and it would be a crime to deceive your lover. Your ills have not been so severe as I imagined. Alas! according to your description, they were far worse! Madame; I cannot find it in me to have much pity for your sufferings. Have patience, Sophie; I am very patient and in that I am surely more deserving than you. No poppy, on any account; camphor and plenty of baths, if you seriously need a composing draught.—It is no advantage whatever that the teeth should be late in coming. The eight incisors, four above and four below, are usually the first to come, and they are generally through by the end of the first year. I

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

came into the world with two molars in my head, a singular thing, but not especially rare. Do you not know of a doctor or surgeon to whom you could take her, in case of accidents? Can you speak to him? It is only too true that the first three years of infancy are very stormy ones. I hope my daughter is not with other children: remember to tell me. Infectious diseases, to which children of her age are very subject, are only to be avoided by bringing the little ones up separately. Can the little lady stammer a few words by now? It seems to me she might well give herself the trouble of calling you, for example.

Alas! my Sophie, I shall find you again some day; and you will clasp me in your arms and love me always; but the roses on your cheeks and the fire in your eyes will be gone. I shall feel your soul, but I shall not see it. O pitiless tyrant, 'tis your work! But, if ever I regain my liberty, I shall lay our case at the foot of the throne: I shall go myself and shall say to our young sovereign that he is, all unknown to him, an accomplice in a barbarous injustice. . . . 'Sire, you see before you two unfortunate beings, the victims of persecution committed in the name of equity. You see a young man bent low with misfortune and deprived of sight by long and intolerable pains, which he has never deserved. My ancestors have served you well for more than five centuries, and I have inherited their zealous ardour. I would gladly have spilled my blood for you who are the father of my country. You are my father, sire, you are

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

my father before the barbarian who has envenomed the life he gave me; for it was under your authority that the knots were tied of a union that was responsible for my existence. Well then! sire, they have removed me from your presence, from my country, from my family; they have stifled my complaints; they have dared to purloin the letters I addressed to your Majesty, in which I laid claim to your justice and your kindness. Sire, I can no longer gaze upon your august countenance, but I know that every minute of your reign reveals your fatherly spirit. Learn then from me what you will never learn from another.—Behold, this is the fruit of my tears and vigils: from the heart of an odious prison, I have paid my debt to you and to my country as well as the poverty of my talents and the absolute lack of any outside help would allow me. What iniquity is practised in your name! I pray you, confound these petty tyrants who would deprive you of your dearest prerogative, the right to be merciful. Read this, sire, that I send you, and seek in it the truth they are endeavouring to conceal. . . .’

For the rest, my Sophie, I have chosen my part, and to such good effect that I actually busy myself for more than an hour a day in learning to write with my eyes shut, in order that I may still be able to write to you myself, when I am blind; I shall succeed. I fold a piece of paper into as many folds as I want lines, and I follow each of these folds in turn, placing my finger on the end of each word, to ensure a suitable gap between it

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

and the next. It is slow work, and requires a great deal of patience; but I shall want still more, if I am to become blind. What most I dread is excessive meditation, for already I feel the inconvenience of thinking too deeply, even now that I can still enjoy the distraction of reading. Every idea, and you are always the occasion or the object, every idea, I say, stops me, makes me call a halt. I follow it, extend the train of thought to its farthest limits. I lean my head upon my hands and meditate, my eyes fixed upon the table, seeing nothing. Hour follows hour, and you may still find me in this stupid position. A sudden noise recalls me to myself: I go across to my garret window, and lean out. All that I see reminds me of you, or recalls painful memories. You would hardly believe how distressing is this state of mind. I only get relief from it by deluging myself with work, and now I am losing my eyesight! They say to me: 'Work less.' . . . But is it better to lose one's reason rather than one's eyes? I remember how one day I started, mechanically, without knowing what I was doing, to sing the fine monologue out of *Tom Jones*: 'O thou who canst not hear me, thou whose only crime is to love.' (You know that for a long time, ever since I have adored my Sophie, that opera has been my favourite. When Madame de Changey teased me for singing, she said to me: 'And especially something out of *Tom Jones*'). Never, never, have I realised so fully how fine the music is, how vigorous and how passionate; it

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

was in the midst of the most profound meditation that I began to sing, to express my sentiments, as it were. You have yourself seen my eyes fill with tears as I sang some tender melody: on this occasion I began to sob. At length I noticed that some four or five people had stopped to listen to me. I soon ceased, for fear of breaking the rule about 'gagging' which they are always ramming down my throat. But I wondered greatly at finding myself singing in this way: that song was a cry that came from my very soul; you may judge the part my imagination played in it. If I do not go mad, my darling, it will show that my head is a great deal stronger than I think it is.

O thou, who makest me love a life I have such good reason to hate, thou who givest me strength to bear up against so many ills, the reward is in thy heart. Keep it pure, tender and faithful, I pray you. Reserve thyself for life with thy Gabriel: love him ever; love him even as he loves you, and confide our happiness to the mercies of time and constancy. O charm of my existence! I live in the hope of seeing you again: my soul, which is for ever rushing forth out of these gloomy vaults to seek for you, will one day rejoin yours, and my lips will once more rest upon your own. Ah! Sophie! one moment, one single moment. . . . I would give my life for a moment. . . . I would give it for one of my dreams to be realised. . . . My dear, my all! Be no longer faint-hearted, I implore you; and above all conjure your wits or I shall lose my temper completely. O my

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

Gabriel-Sophie! your mother is never silly except when she tries to play the wit and then she is very silly. Tell her so, will you? Tell her respectfully, but tell her all the same. What is so good is that in all your earlier letters you confined yourself to expressions of love for our daughter, because, you said she was like me: you will agree that the ruse was a poor one. I hope one day you will turn your attention to some other; you might make the daughter speak: then you could write the words 'love' and 'tenderness' in all good faith; but to preserve the illusion, mark you, you must append 'deepest respect,' 'veneration,' and the like, and it is my hand that you will take the liberty of kissing. For my part, I shall smack both mother and daughter, because I am no business man, and so lavish a display of wit humiliates me. I do not want any of my family to have more than I have myself, remember, saucy baggage!—You are abusing the permission I gave you in respect of doing without common-sense. What! the war fever has caught me again, has it, because I said that it was cruel to die for one's country before the age of thirty! Apparently one can only make war for one's country. O astute logician! But since this disturbs you let us talk seriously. It is doubtless true that I have a passion for my profession: that is simple enough. Brought up amid all the privileges of service, burning with ambition, greedy for glory, strong, daring, ardent, and yet of a very phlegmatic disposition (as I have proved over and over again), I ought to consider

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

myself cut out for a soldier. Five years of my life were devoted almost entirely to military studies. There is no book on war in any language, dead or living, that I have not read; I can show extracts, notes and comments, and memoirs written by me on all branches of the profession, treating of the most lofty ideals of warfare down to little details connected with engineering, artillery, provisions even. You will understand that I do not willingly renounce what I have been at such pains to acquire. But, besides the fact that I have but one passion in life, to which all others are, will always and ought always to be subordinate, my ideas on the subject of soldiery have changed for some long time. In the first place I think that men, and consequently kings, can only grant what they themselves possess, —namely, the right to perform just deeds and to demand justice in return, in conformity with the order of Nature and her immutable laws. A good man ought therefore to be the sole judge of the legitimacy of the war in which he is to take part. This philosophy, which is and ever will be mine, is hardly compatible with a uniform. In the second place, regular troops, standing armies, have never been and will never be good for establishing anything but arbitrary authority, and maintaining it. Now I am not one of those mercenaries who, recognising only him from whom they receive their pay, never remember that this pay is paid to them by the citizens, who pride themselves on serving one man, while they ought to consider themselves destined for the defence of their country; who fly

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

to carry out the behests of him they call 'master,' an infamous word, harmful to king and people alike, never thinking that they are really wearing a livery rather than a uniform, nor realising that the vilest, most odious, most detestable of professions is that of satellite to a despot, of gaoler to one's comrades : military service does not therefore suit me. In the third and last place, as soon as I saw that my father was willing to do nothing for me, and thought of nothing beyond closing all the careers open to me that he possibly could, I began to think for myself and mastered other professions. Maybe I have become as apt at foreign affairs as in my more palmy days I was an adept in the science of war; especially when one thinks of my poor eyesight. You must see, Sophie, how far you were from guessing my secret, and that you ought not to judge your Gabriel entirely like other men. I am to-day, both from principle and inclination, completely recovered from what you so neatly describe as the war fever; but that is not to say that since one of man's first duties is to regain his liberty, if there were no other way of doing so but by war, I should not attempt it by that means. But the 'philosopher' who pronounced me a stupid youth at fifteen, and when he heard one of our ablest warriors speaking of me, after the '69 campaign in Corsica, as a distinguished orderly in the training-school of our young officers, remarked that it would seem that that was my one talent, to-day ends by asseverating that I have the wits of a hundred devils; whence it follows that I am an infernal rascal

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

incapable of repentance, and that, what is more, my mind is a mass of sparks and flashes, incapable of consecutive work or consecutive reasoning (doubtless because in two years I have pursued the study of mathematics beyond the differential and integral calculus); this philosopher has no desire to see me step out of my tomb, nor has he any wish to pay for my shroud. Rest assured, therefore, about war. As to my *honour*, believe me, I implore you, when I repeat that it is a very independent quality. Without having ever been bitten with a mania for fighting, I have had the misfortune to establish fairly completely my claims to that simple and common quality men call bravery, and never, looking me in the face, would anyone question my resolution.—I do not know, in truth, where your wits have gone wool-gathering, nor do I see why it is so difficult to understand that a man's daughter is the granddaughter of that man's mother, and that this mother, who has such an abhorrence for the mistresses of this man, may still, notwithstanding her detestation, have shown her good will towards her granddaughter, and that that good will may be worth a large sum of money. God forgive me! You anger me; but, so long as our guardian angel does not take up the quarrel, there is no harm done. . . . Scratch out, sir, scratch out anything that displeases you; but you will owe me a letter for every one in which there is any scratching out; come, trifle not with me, I am too good an arithmetician.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

Madame, send back my hair if you do not want it, and I will burn it together with two bags full weighing about two pounds, which I have been kind enough to keep for you, and never meant for your worthy daughter. . . . Poor little one! Alas! had she been born in our happy days, the breast of her mother would assuredly have provided her with milk; she would have brought us happiness and we would have given her strength. Reared under the auspices of love and nourished in the arms of affection, she would have drawn her life from its true source, and our kisses would have wafted health into her frail body day by day. But alas! no sooner had she opened her eyes than her parents' cloak of misfortune fell around her too; our care, our caresses, were withheld; would that Love might restore her to us. It is Love that gave her life, Love that should protect it. Ah! if she be not unworthy of Sophie, the joy of being born of her, of seeing her, hearing her, serving her, should amply repay her for all else. The whole universe does not equal one true heart's-joy. . . . To be just, you are not incorrigible. This time it is my poor eyes, not my *fine* eyes; but you began to make the letter 'f' and had apparently great difficulty in making a 'p'. Nor have you said, in the last three or four letters, one word about my resemblance to the all-beautiful Gabriel-Sophie; for fear, no doubt, of giving her the small-pox. But, frankly, C. was more than pretty, and she was very like me. But, at your daughter's age, one can detect likenesses to no one.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

It is only at the age of five or six that the features assume a definite form. For the rest, it is of you, not of myself, that I would have her remind me. But that one of us who sees her will be sure to see in her countenance the countenance of the other, because we always see what we long to see, provided fear plays no part in our desire. Farewell, my tender-hearted lover, farewell, my happiness and my life. For ever, ah! for ever will the love to which I have delivered my whole existence be my guiding star. I adore you, O my dear love, and want no more than that I should be loved; but I want that; ah! I want that always. GABRIEL.

You may be sure the two rings and three hearts you sent me have been almost eaten up in my delight at having them. They will last, I hope. But it is a long time since I treasured away in a box the remains of the lock of hair on which the heart was hung; and every time I open the box it falls to pieces. Could you not send me another, greedy!

I warn you quite seriously, that the first time your four pages or less are not full pages, I will reply with a simple line, madame, written in the middle of the page, 'I am, in profound respect, etc.'—nothing more. What if you please is the meaning of six white lines? I lay a wager the good angel tried all the sympathetic inks in the world in his endeavour to decipher them.

Have you still got the cuffs you promised me? They will be very useless on my wrists, but they

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

would do my heart a world of good. Do not work too hard at such a task: it might affect your chest.

Do not contemplate making me a watch chain, it would be waste of labour; they have not returned me my watch: why, I do not know: for some ridiculous reason, no doubt, but we have here to do with State Secrets, which always amuse me; but what does not amuse me is the fact that they have also kept back my case of mathematical instruments, which would often be very useful to me, especially for my commentary on Ovid. An explanation requiring four pages would be done in four lines with a figure. I might very well have spoken to M. L. N. when I had the pleasure of seeing him; for not only has he never refused me anything, but he has even granted me favours I should not have thought of asking him; but I had something more important to speak to him about, and am always afraid of appearing importunate in his eyes. It is certain that the privation is a very real one and there can not possibly be a valid reason for it, nor any reason at all compatible with common-sense. But perhaps you think you are the only one who possesses the privilege of having no common-sense? What 'loss of fortune' are you thinking of? The philosopher falls short of any property by a million, to say nothing of his debts. He has only a life interest in what he possesses; he has consumed more than £500,000 of the entail, into which I come by right. No one in the world can dispossess me of Madame de M.'s fortune, but I want none of it. Her fortune is hers, seeing that she has no more

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

children, that I despise her, and that I refuse to live with her. But that can hardly be called a *loss*. There only remains the property of the philosopher's wife, but she too has no heir save 'her rascally eldest son.' . . . But the good angel is trembling at the licence I am taking, foreseeing already a seventh page: rest assured, good angel, I have cut the half sheet on purpose, to prevent my writing more. Do not trouble yourself about the white pages, O my good angel: if you like, I will give you a sympathetic ink (the receipt for one, that is to say) which neither you, nor the devil, who is more cunning than you (for you are more good and kindly than cunning, and you know how to shut your eyes) would ever find out for yourselves. I have just read some lines on the death of Voltaire, worthy of being committed to memory, to my mind: the last one is very beautiful, I do not know where I have come across a more beautiful line.

'Dis que Voltaire est mort ! pleure, et repose-toi.'

XXVIII

February 13th, 1779.

Your letter, which I received yesterday evening, drew tears from my eyes, tears of love, of joy, of gratitude and of indignation. In a word, I do not know what emotion it has not called up in me. My feelings were so strong, my head so weak, my

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

heart so shocked and my health so shattered that I put off writing until to-day, and ten volumes would not contain all I have to say. O Sophie! dear love, of all women the truest lover, explain to me, if you can, the inconceivable effect, ever new and ever waxing greater, which all that emanates from Sophie produces upon me. . . . But let me be calm and try to make you understand (for tell you in so many words I cannot) the obligations we contract day by day. This man, of whom you dared almost to complain; this man who had written, on this envelope, the four words you would attribute to me; this man whom, alas! I never see, but who has made me weep for love of him and gratitude for his kindness, had justified you in your undertaking even before you entered upon it, and that without writing to me, without saying a word to me. O my Sophie-Gabriel! There are some things that belong only to the tender, the generous, the sensitive, and they put us under far greater obligations than services of far greater import in themselves. There is a confidence which we only bestow on the honourable. They alone believe in virtue, because they alone are capable of it; they alone are compassionate and tender-hearted; others may feel, but these are deeply affected by their feelings; but to be tender-hearted one must have a heart, a heart capable of lasting passions, instead of mere sensibility which is, more often than not, only a fleeting impression. . . . What am I saying? The most lovable of men is he who combines with benevolence a force of character

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

sufficient to put it into practice. We have known two such men . . . and Gabriel, happy Gabriel, so well loved and so worthy to be loved, if only for the truth and fervour of his passion, Gabriel, who has received his *poésies érotiques*, without pursuing the barbarous advice you venture to give to-day, without taking the humiliating precautions which might, possibly, tie his hands, Gabriel *knows* you are not guilty, knows you are the fondest of lovers, the most adorable of women, as well as the most adored, and that he would himself be an ingrate to impute the delay to you. You who know my heart, you who know what value I put upon a simple wish to oblige me, judge what an influence he must acquire over me, who experience his kindness, nay, realise his kindness to the full. I wrote to him to this effect only two days ago: may he put his trust in my honour. My conscience, that hidden consoler that makes itself heard above the multitude, above the report of high renown, my conscience, I say, tells me I am worthy of his trust; if he gives it me, he may be sure of a devoted friend for life. Accept my most loving thanks, my tenderest caresses, the burning transports of my soul, the homage of my whole being: you must make out for yourself all that is passing within me; for how can I express it? Hardly have I strength enough left to feel. . . . But bear well in mind that I shall never get used to hearing you say that you love me, that I have no notion of reserve in love, whether it be adorned with the name of prudence

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

or any other pseudonym, and that I prefer death to a cool letter from my Sophie.

The length of my walk is increased: it will be still further increased one day, and I promise you I shall restore you your Gabriel before very long. Calm yourself, my love, I implore you; if you wish on your side to contribute to my cure, your own health must improve and your *régime* be more sane. What is the meaning of going to bed at eleven and not sleeping, and then rising at six? Sophie! my Sophie-Gabriel! Alas! a word of your last letter made me suspect you were working for your living. I rejected the idea with horror, and I did not even want to ask you for fear of calling down ridicule on my poor head or falling into a passion with the R.'s. But I had guessed only too correctly, it seems. For whom do you take me, though, my wife? What! I shall have money for you will earn some! Alas! alas! have I not cost you enough already? Do you want remorse to combine with grief and kill me outright? Ah! I have told you many times before: Sophie, my Sophie! you will soon have this advantage over your Gabriel, that none other than he will ever have the right of styling himself your husband. How dearly am I to pay for such felicity! Yes, my dearest, I call love and honour to witness that I would gladly at this moment, as at all moments of my life, be reduced to the utmost poverty and lead an obscure life of penury, obliged to hoe the ground for a bare subsistence, and know myself

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

yours, wholly and entirely yours, bound to you by indissoluble bonds. Sure that Sophie would be happy with me in a cabin, I should think myself the richest and most fortunate of mortals. Entering my humble cottage, I should be greeted with peace and lovingkindness: I would cover my adored wife with kisses, as well as the child nestling in her bosom; overwhelmed with the delicious burden of her charms, I should tell her, as I kissed the eyes shining bright with passion and desire: 'No, there is no happiness save in love; there is no wealth save by my Sophie's side.' . . . O my dear, my dear, it would be my triumph and my joy; but your sex, your training, prejudice. . . .

My dear darling, I do hope you have taken advantage of the fine weather and done a good deal of walking. I am now allowed three and a half hours' walking, and I should have more but for the order, or rather the ridiculous disorder, of this house. If I were cut short for the benefit of other prisoners, I should not object; but the others are no more fortunate. How deeply touched I am by the idea that you have had in regard to our solitary walks! May it induce you to multiply them! Alas! I never see the sun shining but I say to myself: Ah! if only Sophie and I were breathing the same air, how much more pure would it be! I never see a flower but I long for you to smell it, and groan inwardly that I cannot place it in your bosom! O my Sophie-Gabriel! we have had experience of well-nigh everything and we know well enough

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

that there is nothing in the world that is not made more delightful by the presence of the loved one. For ordinary lovers, how sad our life at Amsterdam! How awful for another woman the privations you have had to undergo and still have to, without hope, alas, of compensation or consolation! How awful that life of poverty you bore with such cheerfulness, of which you would hardly have deigned to think at all had your Gabriel not been there to share it with you; how cruel would all that have seemed! Ah! Sophie alone knows how to love. But alas! the very perfection of her love, the exquisiteness of her sensibilities is at this moment the measure of her misfortune. The more one loves the more one needs to love, the more active is the heart, the more poignant are its pains; and however fertile the imagination that lets fall, through the charming medium of hope, a few drops of pleasure into the bitter cup of pain and absence, the compensation is a very poor one in the light of such evils. O dear love! I say, with Tibullus, that the passion we have for one another would seem a fable, a veritable romance to most men: but who would not prefer the ridicule mankind may choose to heap upon us to the lot of gods without love? Dear love, at one time your only concern with the calendar was to count the larcenies of love; but shall you again forget, as you did last year, that the 24th of this month is the fête-day of a very renowned patron of your Gabriel? Alas! every day was my fête-day, when I was with you: every day, every hour brought me gift-offerings at love's hands. Ye

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

gods! how my lot has changed! how your poor Gabriel has fallen from his high estate! But the day when first I knew you, and that on which I was joined to you in bonds indissoluble, those are my greatest fête-days, those are the days I hold sacred. Yes, my Sophie; and I believe our love to be equal and mutual; it is in the name of your daughter and your love, and your delightful favours, that I conjure you to love me still; dare to tell me that you love me: be ever true, ever simple and straightforward; be ever what you were, what you are, and accept my incense, my vows, my adoration, my kisses, my transports of happiness; and so long as you love me, what matter if your love and mine be known to all the world? What matter that every living thing knows that you burn with a flame more pure, more holy than that which burns upon an altar.

GABRIEL.

I send you a sheet of verses, and you will receive a similar amount each time. I beg you to give me a straight answer to this question: What is Orosmane's unhappiest moment? Is it that in which he thinks he has been betrayed by his mistress? Is it that in which, after having stabbed her, he finds her to be innocent? Note that I only consider the space of time that elapses between the moment when Orosmane receives Nérestan's note, and that in which he kills himself. C. M. P. L. was principal singer to the Elector of Bavaria, and, it must be acknowledged, the second or third singer in Europe; Gabrielli has a greater reputation for

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

beauty of voice, but she is certainly less of a musician and has infinitely less talent in adagio singing, which is undeniably a singer's greatest test. —I thank you a thousand times for the interesting account of your manner of living. Ah! can you imagine that there is a single detail of your life which does not concern me? Never mention M. de Rougemont by name; say simply Cerb.

XXIX

February 20th, 1779.

It is not I who have begged you to write 'very soon'; I am far too much afraid of troubling you; it is to M. B. that I owe as many thanks as I owe you reproaches, if I may say so. Behold your letter; all is forgiven; but hear what I have to say and judge if I may not pat myself on the back for my forgiving spirit. By a very simple mistake, but one fraught with cruel consequences, I have to-day, the 20th, received a letter which M. B. had meant me to get on Friday, the 5th of February, and despatched on Saturday morning; but it now turns out that this letter was yours of December 10th, which I answered on the 25th of the same month. Immediately my mind was at work; it is never slow over anything that concerns the heart. I thought you . . . how could I tell? dead, ill, or dying! I imagined that, out of a purposeless pity that only renders one's torments more cruel and protracted, they had deceived me to

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

gain time; this was all the more probable since I had asked for news of you as long ago as the end of last month. M. B. was the only man who could throw light on the matter: he should have been written to, for he would assuredly have repaired the error as quickly as he could; but, in the most trifling as well as the most important of circumstances, with the most gracious of favours as with concessions granted in strictest equity, mistakes always tell against me, and in spite of all my well-wishers, M. B. was not to be found before Tuesday the 9th, because the King and Queen had come on Monday the 8th to Paris, to try and make some hundred couples happy, while so many other innocent couples were still groaning in their irons. (Behold *comme les rois sont bons* . . . no matter how their generosity miscarries!) M. B. confessed his error in the goodness of his heart, and wrote to you the same day, the 9th, to remove my anxiety. You 'hastened' as you say and this morning, the 20th, I have your letter. Now, on the 25th of December you sent me my rings, which I received on the 27th; I have a hundred thousand reasons for thinking you are in the neighbourhood of Paris; I should hate to think you are at Salles. I have endless reasons for not imputing the delay to the excellent M. B., for it seems to have cost him as much as it did me. Whom then am I to blame for my ten days and eleven nights of agony? I do not know if it is you; but if you already treat so lightly the poor wretch who, from dawn to even, is entirely, solely occupied with you, dreams of you,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

thinks of you, speaks of you, writes to you, for you; if for some reason which I cannot imagine you are so indifferent to the anxieties, the fears, illusions, folly, if you will, of this soul which you alone can kindle, of this heart where you hold such absolute sway, of these senses which burn in memory of you with all the fires of love, Gabriel is more unhappy than he thought.

Yet your letter, your charming letter, dear Sophie, is the letter of a tender-hearted lover: it was very necessary to me, if calm was to be restored to my heart, hidden for so many days under a cloud so black that it enveloped the precious *débris* of our happiness completely. I feared. . . . But on this occasion at least I was mistaken. O hard fate! O cruel perplexity! I confess to you, my Sophie, that I am torn by anxieties hitherto unknown to me. I could say freely, with Orestes: 'My innocence at length begins to weigh upon me.' There is no rest for me with such implacable enemies; there will be no rest for me but in the tomb. No pity can penetrate their souls, which are hard as stone: as savage as they are haughty, what their iniquity refuses, their commiseration will never accord. It is too hard, too hard! I know not if, under the ban of that fatal necessity that leaves crime to triumph and innocence to groan in prison, I am destined to die of despair, or really to deserve my fate by committing some terrible crime; but the pain preceding death is too long: I feel transports of indignation, hatred, rage, which never before had access to my soul.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

You cannot conceive with what shameful perseverance they heap contempt and insult upon me. The most wretched of men am I. Suffering, attenuated, almost blind: if you no longer loved me, do you think that the most trifling aid, such as one bestows on a lackey, would be denied me by my father? Would you believe that he speculates on my health; that he dares to say outright that he is being deceived (by the doctor, that is, the surgeon, the oculist, M. Lenoir, M. B., who is almost as indignant as you would be yourself, and M. Am., who has written to him in very strong terms); that I am perfectly well; that I ought to be well; that I am too happy? Finally, his sweetest word of all is that I am a 'poor fool.' Would you believe that I am not allowed, even at my own expense, to hire a servant, or to buy fresh linen? My bill for drugs for the last six months amounts to some 1400 francs; and I have 600 to dress on, support myself and so forth: I go naked, because I prefer to have a few francs in my pocket; for the last twenty months, only, I have gone barefooted! Alas! alas! at least those to whom we owe all need not reproach themselves for any feelings of pity for our fate; it only wants this last misfortune to complete the sum of my miseries; and I say to all those who do not know the heart they . . . but, O my dear love, excuse, excuse these indiscreet complainings. Grief suffocates me. Alas! why can I not unburden myself of my trouble on your breast? O my dear other half, all the world hates me but you, and I should hate myself if you

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

did not love me. But alas! where will this fatal love lead you? Have you not sacrificed enough already? Have I not heaped enough of my own miseries upon you? I drag you down into a bottomless pit, and this knowledge, which is ever present to my mind, adds cruelly to my misfortune. It has no bounds: it never will have. Am I to expect my liberty from one who refuses me my most pressing needs? Ah! who does not know that the unjust live far longer than the just? . . . But whatever his cruelty, I shall never accustom myself to the idea of waiting for my father's death! Why do you persist in uniting yourself to my lot? . . . Best beloved, our only happiness lies in meeting; to love is our life: we must not renounce the hope of being once more joined together; only with our last breath will our love be extinguished. What a destiny! and what a fate is reserved for the guilty, if this is the reward of innocence and faithfulness. —Your 'slight ailments' are not slight at all so long as the palpitations continue and you do not sleep; no use for you to try and conceal the fact; I saw it plainly enough. I want to know in detail your daily *régime*. Are you allowed baths? If so, take them; and, better still, ride on horseback; if it be possible, which I doubt, do not read or write at all late; persevere in trying to get sleep, as though you were reclining within my arms: lie down on your bed from time to time. Sophie! Sophie! take care of yourself. Why have a tooth pulled out that is not hollow? Do you think other teeth are still to come? My Sophie, your person is as much to me

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

as your heart; I implore you not to treat it so lightly: you have no right to do so.—I like not such vague and general information about my child. Why do you not have her more often? I know no one with more right than you to make fun of women's chatter; for I have never seen one more silent, or one whose talk is so well considered. It is true that a careless observer, who, not knowing any more of your history than the world in general knows, expects to find in you impetuosity, spirit, volubility, is a little surprised to find only gentleness, modesty, a maiden's bashfulness. Poor people! Not to know that love is only born in an honest and brave soul; that no sentiment is so chaste as love, no pleasure more decent than the gratification of pure desire.

Alas! my Sophie, I fear that, to the end, our motto will have to be: *Di memoria nudrirsi, più che di speme*. When the diminution in one's strength, one's faculties, is slow and hardly perceptible; when it is through an infinite succession of moments that one's existence is degraded, one can only perceive the change as something very slight, or at any rate nothing to be in any way surprised at; and I can very well imagine a man, who sees an old mistress again after thirty years, saying under his breath: 'My God, how she has altered!' without thinking that the thirty years have made similar ravages on his own person. Decrepitude ought not to be as sad and grievous a state as we think, we younger folk, because our sensations diminish

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

with our strength. And yet, my love so dear, I can well believe that in some souls the heart's activity is in no way lessened by age; for, if the energy of the heart was similar to that of the other organs of sense, it would seem that in those moments when I nearly faint I ought not to feel my love except as a very feeble passion. In reality it is just the opposite, dear love; with so many reasons for hating life, I congratulate myself on still being alive, that I may love still more. I love you with all my wonted tenderness, with a love sharpened by the fear of being deprived of you while we are both still young; and this tenderness is quite independent of my senses, since I have hardly strength enough left to lift my arm to write. I think, therefore, my child, that when we come to old age we shall still be lovers. Our declining years have, therefore, their delights as well as any others. This season of ice may be warmed by the soul; and the fable of *Philémon et Baucis* is a poetic fancy, a sentiment taken direct from nature: but to feel oneself breaking up so rapidly beneath the blows of misfortune; 'tis indeed a mournful position to be in. Ah! Sophie! Sophie! I hope, I still hope that he will not abandon me, this cherished master of mine who is, nevertheless, sometimes so cruel: this love to whom I have vowed my life, and of whose charming lessons I am still gaining experience. He will revivify my whole being. Ah! yes, my Sophie, were it only by a look from you. Do you remember what it was that you, with charming appositeness,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

likened to a sensitive plant? . . . But no, my Sophie, you are but a silly after all; the comparison is not a good one: if you were to approach a sensitive plant, if you stretched out your hand to it, it would shut up and hide itself; and these plants of love, of which the heart is the only gardener, grow, blossom forth and show themselves in all their glory at a breath from the loved one, until such time as, surcharged with love, worn out by the tears that the union of souls draws from them, they succumb and vanish altogether on the breast of pleasure. . . . My dear, dear Sophie, may hope and happy memories sustain thee, even as they relieve and encourage me. Alas! you are indeed left to your own resources! It is a terrible trial; but my love will come out of it victorious. Like Damon, I can say: 'I am sure of my friend.' You know that tale, I hope; it is the triumph of friendship; and love ought never to yield place to friendship. Two friends, Damon and Pythias, united by bonds of the most tender affection, had sworn inviolable devotion one to the other. They were submitted to a very searching test. Pythias is condemned to death by the tyrant of Syracuse: he asks, in the name of mercy, for an interval of respite, in which to go to Greece and set his affairs in order, and Damon stands surety for his friend by becoming prisoner in his place. The time passes: all Syracuse is watching the result of this struggle between friendship and nature. The time draws to an end: the day arrives: everyone pities Damon; they blame him for a too generous

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

confidence: 'I am certain my friend will come back,' says he, and in the end he does come back. We would do more, O my Sophie-Gabriel, we would never leave each other, we would die in each other's arms. But our tyrants would not be likely to act as the tyrant of Syracuse acted. Touched by so fine an example of friendship, he felt that all his power would never procure him the happiness of having so faithful a friend. He pardoned Pythias and all the reward he asked of the two Greeks was to be allowed to make a third in their friendship. Their magnanimity had touched the heart even of a tyrant. With us, O my Sophie, our love is our crime. The more courageous and constant it is, the more it chafes our enemies. We must be ungrateful, mean and traitorous if we would curry favour with them. I really think our sentiments are a severe criticism on their own. But no, we could never perjure ourselves, even to save our lives. I have said so a hundred times, and I say again, that I believe in your constancy as in my own. I believe in your virtue as in the day that lights my path: I would accuse the entire universe before I would suspect my Sophie; but I am susceptible, disturbed (from the evil nature of my position), and above all jealous, and you ought to forgive me. Yes, I am jealous: why? I know not why. It is doubtless a weakness that is part of love itself. Of whom am I jealous? Of no one in particular, of all in general. I have been nearly jealous of my portrait, which you press to your lips and against your heart so passionately; I have been

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

really jealous of your friends and your brothers, worthy though I know them to be; I have been jealous of a woman you used to mention in your earlier letters, and you pleased me mightily when you wrote, without my saying anything about it, this delightful phrase, 'She is of my own sex; she inspires me with a very tender interest, but my lips do not meet hers without repugnance; I fly from her embrace; I almost think it is a flight made in the name of love?' Ah! yes, yes, my Sophie, preserve such charming delicacy of feeling for the rest of your days, I implore you. You have but one friend; just as there is for you but one man in the world, but one recipient of your lightest favours as of your most gracious: for the least of them I would sacrifice a thousand lives. I have never made a secret of my weakness, for just as I am, and not as better than I am, would I have you love me; I have never tried to conquer my jealousy, because I do not think it a sin, because I am certain it belongs to love, is an integral part of love's whole. Dare you reproach me? Have I not seen you anxious and jealous, you, my blessing, my all! You, my life! have I not seen you jealous of the tenderest and most loving of lovers that ever was? It is a very easy matter to supersede one will by making another, when one can; but can you? and would you hesitate for a single instant to assure yourself of the happy lot of your child by every possible means in your power? Ah! you love her, without doubt you love her. You have said so well and so tenderly, 'that it is the father

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

that a woman loves in her child.' Alas! I must confess that I have, or, if you will, I must accuse myself of having had very different feelings for my poor son from those I have for my Gabriel-Sophie; and yet I loved him, I loved him deeply; but how immeasurably less than his sister! But as he had no cause of complaint against me, as I looked upon him as wholly mine (a thing which is certainly not true of her who came after him), it must needs be that this great difference arises out of the difference of my sentiments for the mothers. It is so charming to be reproduced by the woman I love! It is so delicious to have doubled the one I adore, to say nothing of the joy of feeling the bonds of my love drawn closer round me! What lover would not be intoxicated with pleasure, seeking again in the features of his child all traces of those of his mistress; to follow, in this nascent soul, the development of that soul that has called to his soul? Yes, dear Sophie, yes, it is no exaggeration of love, the enthusiast, when I tell you I love you a thousand times more than I did. Something has happened within me that has increased my love times without number, or increased my power of loving, I know not which. May you, my beloved wife, experience the same! You do not say! Alas! perhaps you dare not: perhaps too, to establish a state of equilibrium between us, nature has willed that I should become more sensitive to love, as you were always the more lovable of the two. It is a

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

just exchange, and I have nothing to complain of: it is my part to adore unstintedly. Ah! how well do I fulfil my duty.

I must leave you, for a few hours at least, for I am in pain, and cannot endure the position I have to assume in order to write. I put the pen in my hand again to reassure you on the score of that little gust of grief (moreover, I owe a penance to the good angel, and yet I mean to write at least two pages more). Alas! thou whose beautiful eyes were so quickly clouded with sadness at the sight of any ill befalling thy Gabriel, at the least suspicion of bad health coming to him, thou must now be anxious indeed! Ah! love is too ingenious to torture itself. But those who are incapable of feeling it, and think us unfortunate in experiencing the anxieties born of love, are the people who lack a sense. They are as the blind, who deny the beauty of the rose, because they only feel its thorns; or as men deprived of all sense of smell, who deny the sweet odour of the roses. Farewell, this time, farewell, my heart's one passion.

GABRIEL.

I have slept for three hours, for the first time for five days. I feel much better. I feel even lively; I simply must write. Madame was saying that these three hours of sleep need not delay the despatch of my letter for three seconds.

'The liberty of the press': truly, it is here; behold

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

it! Don't you see that all the viziers and sub-viziers, sultanas and sultana soubrettes, titled jobbers, knighted valets, protected thieves, privileged monopolists, etc., and two thousand etceteras besides, would think or even say that the King is no longer king if he wished to take advantage of the public intelligence instead of suffocating it. A certain Cénomaüs once cast into the midst of a body of priests, who were explaining the oracles, a book entitled: 'Impostors Found Out': imposture is and always was the crime of the philosopher. Now I have shown you how these honest folk, the ministers, and these honest folk, the priests, are charlatans of the same species; so now fix well in your head that despotism and hedonism are the sanest of philosophies because they constitute the simplest and most rapid method of governing. You will doubtless feel at once that despotism ought always to be equitable, for kings have all been, are and ever will be the fathers of their people, and their habits were, are and always will be undoubtedly those of honourable men to the end of time; and these new Arguses have had, have and ever will have eyes enough to see everything; and no Mercury has been able, is able or ever will be able to dim those eyes; and there has existed, does exist and always will exist a race of men impassive, infallible, perfect, created for the express purpose of serving a perfect despot; and angelic generations succeed these angelic beings! All this is unquestionable; what need then have we of a liberty of the

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

press? Poor fools that we are! Let us be led; it is not good for slaves to have so clear a vision.

I offer you my compliments on the conquest of the very reverend father. Do you know many miracles that are not *fabricated and absurd*? For my part, I, who was taught at the age of eight that God could do nothing inconsistent, make no stick without an end, for example, used to ask if a miracle were not a stick without an end. My grandmother has never forgiven me. It is true that I would say the same to-day; I am no better!

Why am I getting thinner? Are you mocking me?

Do you know the symbolic *Letters* of every coin? It is an interesting side of the numismatic art.

Upon my soul, you have no nose for spectacles; I pray you, do not wear them, or I shall kick over the traces, I promise you. Obtain a good light with plenty of oil-lamps.

XXX

April 1st, 1779.

Dear and tender love! My life! My soul! How eloquently does your letter breathe your love! How simply it expresses it! How burning is the love! How happy you make your Gabriel, and how fondly he loves you! O Sophie! What would you not be to me if we were together, you who, though so far away, are to me, in my gloomy soli-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

tude, the universe entire. Oh! would that I could, by your side, shed the sweet soothing tears that pleasure causes to flow from my eyes! You would hasten to impress your rosy lips to the traces left by these salt tears. . . . And I, I would just say: 'My love'; and you would weep and I would wipe away your tears with a burning kiss and you would let me take unsparingly of those tender kisses which I alone may cull: we would weep together over our happiness, over our wretched past, over the kindness of those who had brought us together again. Our tears and our sighs, and our groans would all be mingled . . . enchanting illusions! O impotent vows of two hearts hungering for love, consumed by love's fires! . . . How wretched are the lovers whom an unfortunate love, a terrible captivity, and the most cruel absence, torment! . . . But how happy the day that reunites them, the day when love caresses them with his favouring zephyr! Why do you scold me, beloved? Why reproach me for neglecting my health, at the moment when I am attending to it more than I have ever done before, more than I ever thought I could in my life? I am a great deal better, I assure you; I have added absinthe to the dietary I have mapped out for myself. I still digest very slowly, but I succeed in the end, and if my accursed eyes were not just now bothering me more than my stomach I should think myself free of all infirmities. But, my Sophie, keep well yourself, if you wish this long-hoped-for reunion ever to come about. You say something about

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

your chest that terrifies me. Dear love, try to sleep, I implore you: force yourself to sleep: fight against the demon insomnia with all the strength in your power; close your beautiful eyes, even if it does no good.

What you propose to the Valdh. seems very good; what you desire for your daughter seems excellent, although it will come hard to me to call her by that name; but if you refer to my former letters you will see that after due consideration I came to a similar conclusion; and since it is also M. Lenoir's opinion, there is nothing further to say. I have never said to you that I look upon the decree as a mere bagatelle. In itself it is, I own; although to judge by the uproar my father makes about it, it is not. But this fact does not prove that I, personally, have any reasons for wishing to cut short the whole business other than (i.) your interests and those of your daughter, (ii.) the desire that is in me to be henceforward in peace and at leisure to devote myself entirely to my love and my gratitude. They told me, some time back, that I was made to play a part. Yes, I have been made for that, and I ought to know it better than they, who only know the rugged exterior of a young man who was once high-spirited, it is true, but who is to-day broken by misfortune. But they would have none of me when they might; then let them go to the devil! I shall in future only live, if indeed I ever come back again to life, for my love, my benefactors and myself. . . . My native land! . . . There is none in an

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

enslaved country. My reputation! I laugh it to scorn. Sophie, how is it that you are for ever speaking about my letters, never about your own? or rather, how is it that you are always disparaging the latter? That invisible charm, that indefinable something, which is so often lacking in the beautiful, and which, sometimes, sets off the ugly; that natural grace that touches us the more in that it takes us constantly by surprise, and which seems to be due to certain inner qualities rather than external gifts, well! my Sophie, it is the character of your style as much as of your person. The countenance of my Sophie-Gabriel betokens a remarkable mind; but her modesty conceals it from our eyes. It only displays itself when soul and imagination alike are stirred to the depths: and then it costs her no effort: it is unstudied, spontaneous: found but not sought after, and a thousand times more agreeable for that reason, a thousand times more striking. Oh! how well does this magic talisman, which Homer doubtless wished to paint in his description of the Cestus of Venus, how well does it become my love! How much prettier is she, how far more charming are her manners than one would ever have suspected! Graces appear in every word, every look. Her ingenuousness is a foil to her shyness, and this art of pleasing, so delightful as it is when not made an accomplice to vanity, gives her this charm of which she is herself not aware, which she does not seek after, and which, by its power, attracts and commands our love. There, Sophie, is my idea of you and

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

of your letters. Your style is never ornate, but it is always the one most suited to your subject, because you always feel what you say. Whence the right word and the inimitable daintiness, and the eager simplicity that goes straight to the heart and makes it palpitate with joy and passionate tenderness, whence too the fresh charm I now discern in all you write when, my first transports over, calm judgment is allowed its place; for this rare merit of eloquent simplicity, pure sentiment unadorned, does not escape me; thus you are as precious a friend as an adorable mistress; thus will you be for ever dear to me, far dearer than my life, even if you be to me no more than a sister! . . .

.
Your plans concerning the childhood of the little one give me great pleasure; but beware of having her brought up in a convent. Saving your grace, I have seen little good come from convents. Moreover, I have very little doubt that, through the intercession of M. Lenoir, you will obtain permission, even from Madame R . . . , to have the child from the age of three yourself. I can see no objection to that whatever, provided she can be with you, that is, in the same convent.—I said I insisted on your writing an account of your experiences in life, not that I requested that you might. The manner in which I have treated my own (in dialogue, that is to say), makes the narrative interesting and lively; but many details are perforce excluded. Without re-entering upon a discussion on style, the sole

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

reason that you can bring forward for refusing my request is idleness; I do not accept it as a reason. I most emphatically wish you to write everything down; by everything I mean every detail. Remember that you will be working for me alone, that is to say for yourself; it is not a question, in this case, of literature, or of *amour-propre*, but of sentiment; you have only to let your pen answer the dictates of your heart; I have had great pleasure in thinking of the idea and it is therefore your bounden duty to carry it out. If you wish it, the manuscript need not leave your hands till it can be put straight into mine. Ah! my Sophie, why would you deprive me of seeing the monuments of our love traced out by your hand? It would be the delight of my life, a consolation for all my ills; and the truest compensation for them I could have, next to the joy of being restored to you. Do not hold out against my wishes any longer, or I shall begin to think you are ashamed of having loved me so well.

In the meantime, hope on, work, make plans, strive, unceasingly. There are times when much valuable work is wasted by undertaking it in too great a hurry. What matters to me is that my daughter is by your side, or at any rate completely under your control; that Sophie-Gabriel loves me always as I see she loves me now, and that she teaches Gabriel-Sophie to love me too; that she is sure that my love for her will stand the test of fate and time; that never could I do a mean or cowardly

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

action. . . . Ah! you are the same, I know; and your virtues are the guarantee of my eternal constancy. May you never be beautiful but for me! And may the charm that follows you where'er you go, keep us our friends, and win us new ones! But find your happiness with Gabriel, O my all, and never seek it with another . . . for you will never find it. May hope, hope over-sanguine it may be, but still hope, so necessary to life, uphold us, console us, guard us. May we be able in our days of anguish to look to a happier to-morrow. . . . Ah! you say it, as I do! One day, one single day, would be all the compensation we need to ask, and to meet but for one day would leave us with every regret gone out of our lives: *Addio, amore unico, sposa cara, amante fedele. . . . Non ho trovato un solo bacio nella tua lettera.* GABRIEL.

I do not intend to write more, because I send you with this several loose sheets. Work, since you desire to work, but in moderation, and only under the conditions imposed upon you by me. I like the idea of my daughter in nankeen, but let her have plenty of linen, so that there may be no excuse for letting her get untidy and slovenly. I want you also from time to time to make it worth the nurse's while to take great care of the child; suggest to her that one day her young charge may be able to do her a service.

I thank you for your scanty news,—do not over-do it; sitting in one position too long is bad for the chest; work less, especially less assiduously. Do

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

plenty of walking, I implore you.—Can you doubt that I was delighted to hear that you refused to see that little slut of a canoness?

Are you mad, to think that one name or another, one sound or another, can lessen or increase my love for my daughter? I even doubt whether you will be allowed to bear my name, even when you become my wife. A natural child may, with the consent of the father, bear his name, his livery, his arms; but a child born in adultery cannot; at least, I do not think so.

XXXI

February 20th, 1779.

I will not conceal the fact, my best beloved, that your letter agitated me deeply at first. The picture of your anxiety and your struggles, at a time when your mind ought to have been at rest, was one to pierce my heart, all too sensitive as perhaps it is. Therefore must I reply with a passionate letter in which, rendering all possible justice to your intentions, I condemn your own perplexity, the behaviour of your friends, the advice of a man of treachery, who does not even take the trouble to reason, and above all the importance you have attributed to all these childishnesses, even to the extent of affecting your health. *Monsieur le bon ange* is scandalised by my letter; and what is extremely pleasant, but which for all that has not made me in the least inclined

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

to laugh, is that he has undertaken, not to offer you his advice (I should never have forgiven him so long as I lived), but to protect you against me. 'If he were,' says he, 'as much in love as I am, and as he has been, he would have nothing but gratitude for the sentiments which have come to my knowledge.' May love himself punish me if I have anything but gratitude for them. I would remark further that he who says 'I have been in love' need not take the trouble to maintain that he has loved as I love, for, in that case he would say: 'I am in love,' not 'I have been.' Love that has an end is not our love. I remark finally that he is at some pains to convince me that I owe you my thanks for not having taken, for four and twenty hours, more than a single basin of soup; and why? because, forsooth, they have overwhelmed you with absurdities, and advice as cowardly as it is foolish, and tales as improbable as they are lacking in decency. But I owe a thousand thanks to our strict Aristarchus for not having passed a letter in which 'I appear to be in doubt about your sentiments, and to raise questions about something already settled'; I owe him, I say, as many thanks as I owe myself reproaches; for surely, surely, I had no intention to be cruel, and an ingratitude so black as that never entered my head. We must therefore throw all the blame on my wits, on the impropriety of my expressions, and about that the good angel has, on this supposition, done well to proscribe them. I cannot at the same time agree that he is right in thinking that 'the letter to which I have sent an answer serves as a reply to

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

the one I wrote.' My letter, although steeped in my love, was full of discussion and argument. I do not find any in yours. The purity of your sentiments, the steadfastness of your love, if I may speak thus, are to be found in it, without doubt, because it is Sophie who has written it; but she has absolutely lost her head, and can now do no more than love and give way to despair. Gabriel, on the other hand, took up the stale arguments of M. de Mar: and went over them one by one, as well as his coarse fabrications, and showed that his advice was no more reasonable than honest: 'It can be seen that I can recline peacefully upon the bosom of faithfulness.' My inflamed senses have seen that, too, but they can never 'recline peacefully' anywhere, when I read such things as: 'O heavens! the wretched women will kill me between them. The whole day long I have had but one cup of broth; it is midnight': why all this terrible agitation, I should like to know. For the most futile of reasons, on account of hopes too lightly conceived, and immediately abandoned, rigmaroles that can only excite one's indignation or one's pity; on account of the overbearing advice of a man who is not to be trusted. . . . Yes, my good angel! 'I shall again read this cherished handwriting'; but I shall not be so much 'satisfied' as 'anxious.' Why should I be satisfied? I have known for long 'how the matter stands'; and it is not for nothing that I have loved and that I love as I do; but, to repeat my own expressions, I am anxious and in no way satisfied with tears, struggles, terrors,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

delirium, because I maintain that a decided 'no' is short and entirely different from argumentation, amphibology, circumlocution; but all that is not to say that I am in doubt as to the state of my heart: if I were, I should be dead!

In short, it would seem that I am not to enter upon discussions; I shall not do so again, and I repeat that the intention lying at the back of this interference on the part of M. Lenoir ought to please you and excite your gratitude; but I must repeat one word of my letter, which it is of importance for you to know. I know you are incapable of deferring, under any pretext whatever, to the advice which has been given you; but if my love, my bride, if she into whose keeping I have given all my being, ever had the weakness to pose as having sacrificed me, I should never see her more. Your heart will supply my reasons, and reveal to you my motives for saying this. I put them before you with too much energy perhaps; if my letter would have cost you a bitter tear, they have done me a kindness in keeping it back. My Sophie! if you were to ask of me my life, I would give it up to you gladly; but never speak to me more of my rights over you. I have reduced them to the faithfulness and the constancy which you have vowed to me; of more I have no need. Be the arbiter of my days, my pleasures, my destiny; but, if you would leave me my life, leave me your love. I suppose I may be permitted to reassure you, at any rate in regard to terrors that are entirely unfounded; and to tell you that the fear of being

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

forced to find a refuge in Besançon or Sainte-Pélagie is absurd; it is impossible for them to put a woman in prison, several years after the scandal, for outraging her husband, if the poor man was not able to put her away at the moment of her conviction. I may tell you, too (and you know I am not the man to indulge in vain hopes), I may tell you, I say, that, according to all appearances, the star of the Friend of Humanity is on the wane; that he is being attacked on all sides; that his shield is broken to fragments; that his head is brought low, his manœuvres have become known, and that even now I am 'invited to take heart,' and that the man who tampers with my letters will never succeed in tampering with my opinions. Let us wait, dear love, in patience, never growing weary; maybe we are even now very near the end of our time. After all, your lover is only preaching to you what he practises himself. But above all, ah! above all, keep calm. Your health, once so robust, will fail you, dear love, when it comes to a struggle with pains of the heart. At bottom, it is that alone that disturbs me. They bother you, they trouble you, they harass you, they make you afraid, by their inflexible stubbornness, of missing an opportunity of serving me. But a truce to these cruel puerilities, to this . . . I had almost said criminal surrender. What! a whole day without eating! and you want me to take care of myself! and the good angel wants me to thank you, you who have been known to refuse me the very gifts of love itself, if it pleased you to observe something unusual in my physi-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

ogno my! You have Gabriel and you have your conscience, and the reports of others trouble you! Give them your eyes, if you want them to see as you see! Give them your heavenly soul, your loving heart, which I know you to possess, and you only. Pluck blossoms from a shrub, but never look for fruit. They have set you a snare, and you have fallen into it; I am neither surprised nor angry; but what does anger me is that you are in despair, as if you had been yourself guilty of taking a false step. Dear love! My Sophie-Gabriel! I am writing this letter at top-speed, in the middle of the night, although I am far from well, in order not to put off any longer the sending of it, already delayed through my own fault. You will not find me amiable to-day; but as you will love me no less, do not leave me long in my present state of unbearable anxiety; for I shall, until I hear from you, picture you ever as you were on the 18th. Such is the awful burden of absence! Is all well? Yes, on such and such a day; but to-day? Was the day stormy? it seems always the same to us, and we can only enjoy the return of fine weather when we see it has gone by.

.

Rest your eyes, I command you; no pomade—the smoke from coffee-grounds will do good, likewise a bandage round the head, urine baths, brandy and water frequently, no work done in broad daylight; if you followed this advice, your eyes would give you no further anxiety. Do not treat your colds lightly, either, because we must always be-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

ware of the milk when it has been driven away by unnatural means. But, in the name of your own sweet self, do not use your brain overmuch, when you are well again; I know of no way but this to prevent your having any return of the inflammation.—I like what you tell me of the nun to whom you think of confiding your child. Since the poor little girl, doomed from birth to be unhappy, is not to be left to the care of her mother, it is at any rate some sort of happiness to know that she will not fall into the hands of suspects, nor into those of some wretched bigot or idle gossip. The whole art of education during the first years of life is to call attention to nothing, nothing at all, and to instruct the child by means of the things he must obey, and not by means of words he cannot understand. It is what the great and wise Rousseau calls negative education, tending to the perfecting of our organs, the instruments of our enlightenment, before actually giving us enlightenment, and preparing the reason through an appeal to the senses. Negative education, says he, is by no means a lazy one; far from it. It does not make for virtue, but it prevents vice; it does not teach truth, but it makes falsehood impossible. It disposes the child to all that may lead it towards truth, when it is in a fit state to understand it, and towards the good, when it is in a fit state to love it. On the other hand, positive education, which tends to form the mind before it is fully ripe, and to give to the child the knowledge and the duties of man, enervates the body, falsifies the soul and makes the

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

mind miscarry. As time goes on I will talk to you further on this interesting subject. I want our daughter before long to be removed from the village if possible, but not quite yet: let her take her food from the bottle as long as her teeth worry her. Nothing but good can come of letting children grow up as peasants; but it is not right to follow the custom as long with girls as with boys, as you say.

Alas! my Sophie, my poor sad Sophie, practically a virgin, if not a martyr. . . . Dear love, you must think me very foolish. But it is over your eyes, your mouth, your heart, your all that my reason wanders. Restore it to my keeping; or let me take it back again with my own burning lips. *So dolce mente 'l cor m'innamora! pel soco ond io tutto m'infiammo dammi de' baci senza conto.*—Accept my most tender thanks for your charming kindness. You can hardly imagine the pleasure it gives me to know that your honest pen is tracing out the tale of our loves, our pleasures and our misfortunes, pathetic as that tale indeed must be; to find, in your simple confession, so full of tenderness, traces of the progress I have made in your heart, and the struggles which up to now you have not revealed to me, the kindnesses you have robbed me of, and the tears which your reserve and my sighs have cost you; and to note the path, dotted with so many delightful nooks and shady corners, but also, alas, so many halting-places, by which your reason and your

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

feelings led you at length to accord me the victory and make me the happiest of men. Your love is so quiet, your generosity so modest; your manners so simple; your sensations are so sweet, and at the same time so fleeting, your love so ingenuous and so seemly, so passionate and so reserved, whenever it is a question of managing the head or the heart of your Gabriel; my Sophie is a mixture of such rare and admirable qualities for those who know how to read her aright; to do so one must know both how to feel and how to reason. What am I saying to you? My head is turned, when I occupy myself with you in this way; I feel you are here, I see you, feel you, embrace you, and 'tis all labour lost and health too. I certainly foresaw that these memoirs, written as I ask for them to be written, could not possibly be read by a third person; that would mean compelling you to be circumspect, tightening your heart, freezing up your imagination, and depriving the work of all its charm. Therefore I promise you what you ask. But may love preserve me from touching with a profane hand what love itself has dictated! For the rest, forgive me my impatience, O my all! For, besides the fact that patience is no virtue of mine, I can see in these memoirs the happiness of my life!

My Sophie-Gabriel! my all! my love! my blessing! my life! take care of your health! Prune away the thorns; I will be answerable for every-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

thing, provided that you love me, provided that you be rational, and that the noble soul I know to be yours be not capable of breaking faith. *Addio, cara sposa!*

GABRIEL.

I am thankful to your mother for her decision in the matter of her pension. It was revolting to think that you had been considering a reduction of your pittance; but one is hardly accustomed to so much generosity. For the rest, we must admit that of your family it is not the mother who is responsible for the vile avarice shown towards some of its members; I have never found her given to sordid calculations. The food here is good: the wine does not bear thinking of; it is changed every eight days; it is doctored and detestable, and would put an end to me in six months. Why talk of recovering the good angel? We have never lost him. On the contrary, I have begged him to lose his temper occasionally and you must beg him too: for how graciously he regains it! The truth is that hitherto he has never done more than joke; but we owe him too much ever to give him the least occasion for complaint.

Your letter is written in a very round hand.

You will observe that these three pages are, word for word, those of my last letter, and that the first three were infinitely warmer and more tender. What a shame, you say! . . . Ah! good angel, good angel, never tell us that you have ever been in love; if you want to be, come to us and we will teach you how to love!

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

XXXII

May 9th, 1779.

Dear love! How sweet your letter, and how touching! How deep the impression of your love and generosity! Ah! Sophie! Never forget that your Gabriel, so inferior to yourself in everything else, possesses in the same degree these two sentiments, of which one is the life of his soul, and the other has ever been the instinct of his heart. But is it towards Sophie that Gabriel can be generous? he who has received so much from her hand! he whom one of her kisses, one of her looks has rendered happy and who has been overwhelmed with her favours! O incomparable lover! O eternal delights of a heart filled to overflowing with love and gratitude! Before I had deprived you of everything, reputation, fortune, liberty; when you were still in the springtime of your days, and I had not yet withered them with the blasts of misfortune, ah! tell me, tell me whether the longest life, consecrated to love, and adorned with all that chance may still have in store for us, would atone? No, Sophie; I know it would not; but I have also felt that my liberty was your first care: that to recover it was the only way to put myself into a position to pay the least part of my debt, this immense debt that affords me so much pleasure; for, in your own charming phrase, gratitude is a delight for hearts such as ours; and it is sweet to

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

think that an unbreakable chain binds me closer to you, if possible, than you are bound to Gabriel ; and that, while your constancy is a perpetual blessing which every day adds to the obligations already imposed upon me by honour and love, you hold my heart as much from duty as from passion. An expedient at once specious, plausible, and even in accord with our own ideas, has been offered me ; my heart loathed it ; no need for me to tell you why. But I owed it to you, I owed it to my daughter, to myself, not blindly to repulse what might in the end restore me my existence. I have thought it out, and find it more and more possible. But do not think, never think that were my letter of recall lying upon my table here, I would decide without asking further advice.

How glad I am to hear you are putting on flesh and taking baths ! Would you for ever deprive your Gabriel of his peace of mind by losing your health ? Would you deprive him, because he feared to risk your life, of the delicious pleasure, the inestimable happiness of giving a brother to Gabriel-Sophie ; would you return to him with all your bloom faded, all your fresh young beauty gone ; without that neck of alabaster that Venus would have envied, and those lovely arms which he has felt so often round his neck ? My health is uncertain but I imagined that you knew that I have to submit to a *régime* to which I find it impossible to suit myself. Ah, Sophie ! how can I think of you and our past happiness, without burning with all the

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

fires of love? Moreover, am I not a widower? The ring of my box is broken, I know not how, and I have sent little Sophie to the good angel, with orders to give him one sisterly kiss, and no more. The poor child will be sorry to have been absent to-day; for the days on which your letters arrive are fête-days for her; but she will soon come back to me; and you know whether Gabriel knows how to compensate her for her losses, or not.

.

The lock of hair you send me is too pretty; such a present needs no adorning; I have smothered it with my kisses, watered it with tears of love and of desire. I have put the other lock back in my box; it is in shreds. I send you a quantity of my hair; but it is not all for you. . . . What, sir, not all for me? . . . No, madame, not all for you; I want you with the longer strands to make me up a curl like my ring, which, by the way, is becoming completely untwisted. Please arrange it so that I can attach one end of it firmly to something, and attach something to the other end. —But for whom is all this, sir? . . . Madame, you must know that when it rains, I walk up and down the galleries in the enclosure of the keep, where there is a fairly good view to be obtained. You must know further that I noticed yesterday from the window of my dressing-room, separated from me only by a long and wide moat, a very pretty young woman, who made eyes at me for something like half-an-hour. . . . Well, sir? . . . Well, madame,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

it is not for her. You must know further still that Madame de R., who is a brunette, a dark brunette, has sent me some scent and one or two other little things. . . . Well, sir? . . . Well, madame, it is not for her. You must know that Madame F. is very pretty, that Madame de R.'s sister-in-law is pretty, that there is a passably pretty Provençale at the castle, and two very pretty lawyer's daughters. . . . Well, sir, what of them? Madame, it is not for them. . . . But, sir, you put me out of patience. . . . But, madame, I am very sorry; you are too inquisitive and you shall not know for whom I intend my hair. Make me up the curl all the same, if you please, and send it me as soon as you can, for I am in a hurry for it. . . . Scold me, sulk with me, beat me if you will; but be quick.—What, you hate freemasons, for keeping me till three in the morning? You must at any rate agree that they end their meetings by giving some advice which is very agreeable to ladies, and that I am always constrained to follow it to the letter, or as nearly as possible to the letter. I think, with you, that those who now talk the loudest, would soon moderate their voices if I were free. For the rest, I shall leave here feeling very cold, very much restrained, very circumspect, but firm and in an unconciliatory mood. When I say I shall leave, I mean, if I ever do leave my ill-fated prison. My father is much too infirm to marry again. It is very probable that my mother will outlive him; but if I have the misfortune to lose her, with whom can my father possibly unite himself in marriage? He will not be my

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

mother's heir, and he has not a halfpenny of his own.

I would very much like to know what in the devil's name that impudent monk means by considering it extraordinary that you do not make friends with him? It seems to me the reverse would be far more extraordinary.—The word in the enigma is 'flower,' silly-billy! I have just asked the good angel for some twenty crowns: he carries out my wishes with all possible readiness: for he is the king of publishers.—I have already copied the dialogues for you. Do not neglect your memoirs: how far have you got? What I do for you is no concern of yours. I have not had my hair cut, and I could get ten or twenty times as much as I sent you from the hair that has fallen out, and which I have kept.—It is I who owe you *tanto di baci di columba*; your long letter gave me an enormous amount of pleasure. But why still some white sheets?

XXXIII

May 16th, 1779.

I have received your charming letter, O my love! I have received it, O well-beloved! And my heart has found comfort. But from what have you gathered that I thought you undecided? Agitated is not undecided. Never have I thought you capable of hesitating over an obvious and a sacred

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

duty. But I have perceived with sorrow and almost anxiety that to fulfil it may cost you many wearying and painful struggles. You have only to make your apology, O my all! but I have need to know that you stand firm and are at peace in your mind, and I thank you: ah! I thank you from the bottom of my heart. The good angel, now quite amiable, attentive and kind once more, has sent on your letter to me to-day, the 16th; he was here yesterday, too, and his intention appears to be to see that I get your letters as soon as possible. You see how little I expected this one. It is on his part all the more marked a favour as, since my last letter, I have received consolation and marked graciousness from him. But my good angel realised that whatever was not of you could take no place in my heart. I want you to realise the fresh obligations we have contracted: may your heart beat high with gratitude and unfold itself in the sunshine of hope; may it give thanks for friendships and pledge itself fearlessly to love.

.
Yes, yes, my darling, we shall see each other again: yes, tender wife, yes, incomparable friend . . . and one moment's happiness, *un solo bacio di colomba*, a single 'I love you,' will atone; and yet my debt to you not my whole life could repay. Yes, Sophie, you will find that misfortune and grief have only increased my passion, and that, though all else has to submit to time, my love alone need not. . . . O my Sophie-Gabriel! Alas!

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

alas! when shall we cease to feed our hungry spirits on illusion? When will love allow us a rest from the consuming ardour that it has for so long breathed into our hearts without deigning to reunite them?—No, I am not ill, only indisposed; and through my own fault. The whey and the baths did me good; my legs swell every evening, the swelling is always firm, shiny and painful; the toes are inflamed and burning hot; it is at the worst only an attack of rheumatism, and there is nothing disquieting about the symptoms at all; but I have wanted to be the young man again, eat the salad I am so fond of, the radishes which have been my summer food for so many years, the butter that up to now has never done me any harm; and, as these attempts to gratify my appetite were the first after two years, they have made it very clear to me that my time of eating what I fancy is past. Yesterday I had an attack of bile, lasting off and on for no less than five hours. I immediately gave myself up to a course of tea, herbs, and patience! And, modestly entertaining the renewed conviction that I still have my infirmities, I have decided to purge myself the day after to-morrow: I ought to have done so after the whey, but did not want to; I thought for the moment I was once more nine and twenty, instead of sixty, as I am, except perhaps when I think of my Sophie, who is not quite so wrong-headed as to wish to be my doctor.—You see, then, my dear one, that it is only your own folly that has imputed to me a serious de-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

rangement in my health. I shall not send you any more copy for some time: in the first place because I have been working at something else, which you shall see before the last judgment, but which I do not want you to copy; and in the second place because, knowing that you were at work on your memoirs, I could not resist finishing and recopying my dialogues, so that I too might be at work on something similar to yours, realising, almost at the same instant, the delightful memories we have in common; in the third place because I cannot for the moment make way with my essay on literature, seeing that I shall have to wait three months yet for the books I require for the task. Do not hurry, therefore. Rather busy yourself with the charming occupation that is to be the happiness of my life; above all, walk a great deal, my love, and sleep: sleep for long intervals; and even if you cannot sleep, rest on your bed. Do not stop taking milk. Speak to me about your cough, but only to tell me it is gone; and no more of those equivocations, which, in our case, amount to falsehood. Did you think my little design pretty? It is not so bad for a blind man; but then, as I said to the good angel, it is in truth one of love's miracles; perhaps love will work some more.—Ah! dear love, how sweet it would be for you to surpass me in loving, if but for a single moment! My heart will never be beaten, my Sophie; I call you to witness, was the victory not always to me? Do you think I make a boast of it? Do you think it is a sweet thought? Do you think it is a pleasure

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

which I would not gladly share with you? Do you imagine, ungrateful, cold-hearted Sophie! that, even in the midst of a happiness that knows no limit, it is not a bitter thought to feel that it is only myself that am happy? I can hardly believe that the family of M. de M. will be so mean as to deprive you of your dowry. And yet nothing that I heard about them could really astonish me; and, thanks be to heaven, the moment to impose silence upon all that race, or to avenge their insults, that moment which will permit Gabriel to show you what he has been and what he always will be towards you, will come in spite of all of them.—They owe nothing to the little daughter; surely this is strange morality! Such are not the words I wish to hear, madam, remember; a portion of my pension awaits you, if you will accept it. I promise to use the rest for my own needs; I have already broken into this quarter's money to settle my debts with M. de R.

Dear love, the truth and sincerity of your passion will always move honest folk to pity; that is what my mistress is worth to me, for, besides the love she brings to me, she also brings precious friends. . . . Oh! may I soon repay such blissful favours! may I prove my love! . . . My Sophie, are you not as I? It seems to me that at the time of my happiness, I forgot many things: it seems to me my expressions were not half tender enough, nor my caresses sufficiently varied. I think now that I could invent a thousand new

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

ones. . . . Ah! Sophie! have you ever felt my burning desires grow cold? Have you ever seen the eyes of your Gabriel become less sparkling, his voice less tender, his kisses less passionate? . . . No, no, I know; but I know you, and I owe you more every day, and every day I adore you more. O my bride and my blessing! my happiness and my life! I have often told you that you have never plumbed the depths of my heart: you will never know your own worth: you know not therefore how much I love you! Dear love, I await your reply, and let it be a decided answer.

GABRIEL.

Madam, I want no four-page letter, with two pages of news as a supplement. Your last three letters have been five-page letters. Use the sixth for news, therefore; but only send me anecdotes that you hear from time to time; big events I know of sooner than you do.

I have not chosen Sutton's method of inoculation; on the contrary I have refrained from making up my mind; I have left you the choice of two courses, but I am not sure that I do not prefer the other for my daughter, since you will not be having to deal with distinguished doctors, and it is not everybody who knows how to inoculate like Sutton.—Nor I, I do not clearly see what idea the R.'s have in sending you back to Pontarlier; but I should, in your place, ask them boldly, even if my life were at stake.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

You are very brave to give your kisses to an anonymous author, . . . but, dear love, I promise you as many kisses as you spend seconds in sleep; what an inducement to sleep well! My Sophie, I implore you, take care of your chest; under no pretext whatever ought you to sit up late; I rely on your promise. Take plenty of milk and plenty of exercise.

XXXIV

July 1st, 1779.

What am I to say of your lamentations, jeremiads and complaints? Apparently the good angel does not care for pretty women. For my part, who am but a great big ugly man, I asked him for a letter for the 30th of June; I knew it arrived on the 30th, and it is not my fault if I did not get it till to-day. For this once I will forgive him, and I beg you to do the same, although he is at bottom not worth much; but there are others far worse, as I know to my cost.

My father is not an old man; he was only born in 1715, but all the world declares he has never had a day of good health in his life. Alas! it is very difficult to torment others without tormenting oneself at the same time. This man might and ought to have been happy. He rejoiced in the possession of a well-known name, which he has succeeded in rendering famous, a large fortune, plenty of

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

credit. He has had children, almost all of whom are on the way to becoming good men and women, to say nothing of great. I make no exception of Madame de Cabris, whose intellect is of a very uncommon order, even among men distinguished for their talent, and who, in her youth, had the most eloquent black eyes I have ever seen, the freshness of a Hebe, the noble air that is hardly ever seen but among the statues of the ancients, and a figure more beautiful than any I have ever seen; and with it all that suppleness, that grace, that seductiveness that belongs only to your sex. Notwithstanding the depravity of her mind, which I discovered later, I still think that at seventeen or eighteen this perversity was very far below the surface; and I have no doubt whatever that a man of honour and sense, who loved her too, might have kept her straight and restrained her wildness; for her imagination is the seat of her opinions, her sentiments and perhaps too of her sensations; but her impetuosity, her nobility, her fecundity, drained her resources. This astonishing woman was susceptible to generosity through her vanity, to affection by illusion, to constancy, faithfulness even, through obstinacy. It became a habit with her; and habit, even with the most active spirits, soon forges a chain that is very hard to break. My brother, born with plenty of spirit, yet with a very gentle disposition, would have cut a good figure at court, had not a wretched education, wasted opportunities, and the inconceivable foolishness of burying his youth in Madame du Saillant rendered him

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

churlish. His heart was sound, although his head was not over strong (but who knows what it might have become), and his character easily moulded. Madame du Saillant never was and never will be good for anything but bringing children into the world. The nun had certainly a vigorous mind, which some took for folly, because her senses, which were made for nothing less than furnishing a convent, led her to have exalted notions. I think a husband might have made a great woman of her. For myself, I was born with promise of a fine military talent, a certain amount of intellect, plenty of courage and plenty of energy; I ought to have made my way. What has my father done? First, his parsimony, then his hardness, then his prejudices, his avarice and his subsequent violent hatreds, have disfigured, mutilated, ruined us all. His wife adored him for a long time; she would always have loved him, if he would have let her. She was easy enough to manage; he pretended he had tamed her, because he was an imperious tyrant, and hated her. Strong characters are not easily tamed, nor are brilliant minds. My mother ran away to her own destruction, which her husband was not long in consummating. My uncle has the soul and the virtues of a hero. He conceived very lofty plans for his family, and Fortune has shown her willingness to help him to fulfil them, since he has lived, and is now a very rich man, likely to become richer still. My father has been nothing but a constant, daily drain upon his purse, nothing but a perpetual robber of his wealth. In spite of

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

his splendid intellect, he had only mean ideas as regards the members of his household. Possessed of excellent credit, he has done nothing for them. He has ruined his house, forfeited both his rank and his estate; he is isolated in the midst of his people; he has paved the way to his tomb with remorse, undermined his reputation. I assure you, my love, I pity him more than I reproach him.—I agree, my dear love, that an execution in effigy is an insult difficult to digest, but I do not agree that M. de Valdh . . . is so great an executioner as you suppose. I have no faith in executioners who are in the wrong, and besides, I am not dead yet. But the truth is that I doubt if I shall ever afford the rogue the honour of cutting my throat. He has brought my neck low; there is nothing for it but to break his arm. My father has a very sure and very short way of ending it all, which I have never spoken to you about, because we have never been sufficiently near to the end for it to have been worth while. The Prince de Condé must have looked after him at Metz, for my father has a great reputation with the house of Condé. You have, I think, as little doubt as I have that, under the Prince's orders, or simply under the assurance that he so wished it, all was soon over. For the rest, I have never thought of all this but in its relation to you; for, for my own part, I scoff at them all and always shall scoff at them; but I think that when, escorted by my father, or perhaps escorted by myself, I say to the Prince of Condé: 'Your Serene Highness cannot but know that, in spite of my

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

desire to profit by your protection and patronage, I cannot shut my eyes to an outrage of this nature, especially as a reconciliation with Madame de Mo. would only serve, in the eyes of the public, as an apology and the motive for my indulgence'; I think, I say, that the Prince will find I have right on my side. I confess that I think the great personage of whom Madame de R. has spoken to M. de Marv. might well be the governor of the province, stirred up against us by my father. Time will show if I am right.

Madame Sainte-Sophie has not said the last word. Imagine to yourself that little demon (it is of my daughter I speak), when she sees my man, submitting him to a long inspection with her two bright, saucer-like eyes; and after that, making very good friends with him of her own accord; but imagine her further seated on his knees, and catching sight of Mademoiselle Thérèse, her foster-sister, about to take a seat. She sprang up, ran to Thérèse, smacked her, took the chair away from her and put it somewhere else. The poor little drudge let the spoilt child have her way; but when she saw our daughter climbing again on to the lap of the man who had come to see her, she went to sit down again herself. Immediately there followed another jump, another run across the room, another smack; and then Mademoiselle Gabriel-Sophie took both the chairs and carried them over to her cavalier. It seemed to me a wonderful notion. Such are the details that the good angel is not likely to

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

mention, but which are so delicious in a father's or mother's ear. For the rest, she seemed very well cared for, very clean, very plump and as white as a lily. They undressed her. The shameless little hussy performed her toilet calmly in the presence of a strange man. She hasn't a mark on her body, no signs of any pin-pricks on her linen; in a word, she is wonderfully well, and her everlasting racing up and down, and her tremendous vitality, prove the satisfactory state of her health better than all the nurse can say. The little imp greatly astonished a man, who knows me very well, by her petulance the other day. Judge for yourself; her father over again! And tell me how it all comes about. Tell me, too, how she comes to be so pretty. For my part, in spite of her illegitimacy, I begin to think there is nothing but good in my daughter, and I thank you for it. You have done very well boldly to strike out the word '*blindly*'; they must be mad or worse to propose that such a one should treat blindly with her honour, her liberty and her existence, her lover and her daughter. As for me, although Madame de R. has given me many proofs of her character already, I find she can still surprise me. You are right, you can excuse yourself from ordering anything on my behalf, once I have regained my liberty.

I have a very good opinion of your Sainte-S. The friendship she has conceived for you, the circumstances and consequences of this friendship, the things I am told about her, the things you have

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

told me yourself, all interest me tremendously, and I feel already a sincere affection for her.—O my Sophie! how true it is that our cherished plan is but half realised! . . . But why half? Niggard that you are, thus to limit your gifts! Ah! my angel! Do you fear lest the pledges of your love may spoil your beauty? Remember the unfailing charm that is the heritage of the children of a cherished wife—I can see no other inconvenience in your having your daughter, save the perpetual waiting for an arrangement that never comes off. The child might be a boarder in the same convent that you are in; only she is not weaned yet: let us, in the first place, look our affairs clearly in the face. Have you asked M. Lenoir's permission to entrust her to the care of the hospitaller? She does not return to her house until October: that gives us four or five months at least, and many things may happen in that time.—I do not know if you noticed that I sent you some eight or nine locks of hair, weighing two or three pounds in all. Keep a little for your daughter. I have one hair-ring that is still quite good. What, my Sophie! you are turning grey! O my dear, dear love! you will prove to me next that you are not quite sixty. My darling, I want a little purse, made of what you like, without gold or silver, to wear upon my heart, full of everything I have of yours; I have no place to put it for safety. Make the chains of hair, after the manner of the little lock I sent you. Please note, my love, that all the hair is hair that has fallen out. What a loss for me were

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

you to lose yours. You must really put it away carefully in a bag. A hairdresser would work it up, hair by hair.—Who is this V., who has mentioned such a number of people of quality who take umbrage at your daughter's bearing your name?—I thought you told me once that the entail of the Mo. family went to the sons, and that the daughters without sons shared in it. Please reassure me as to this. However that may be, so long as they treat you properly, I acquit them of having anything to do with your daughter. Meet them in everything they ask that concerns the abolition of your marriage except the forfeiture of your dowry; insist, too, on returning to P. and on keeping your daughter. You can promise that you will no longer bear your husband's name; it would not be for long in any case; that you will remain in the convent during the marquis's lifetime: after he is dead they can hardly refuse to let you come out. Ask nothing for your daughter, so long as her person is safe; nothing for me, once I am free.—I strongly approve of your conduct towards the reverend father. You must keep him at a greater distance: such monastic vermin only strive to insinuate themselves into your confidence in order to abuse it, to deceive, betray, intrigue, and make themselves necessary in every quarter. Perhaps they have been spoilt in the past; you do well to unspoil them.—My dearest Sophie! I cannot conscientiously refrain from saying that you are far too trusting, not to be jealous of the woman for whom the lock you have made me is intended, or if you

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

think my passion for her has its limits. No, my love, I idolise her : I have made a temple for her in my heart ; a throne in my imagination, and she is ever queen of my thoughts. Am I awake ? she wakes with me ; she pursues me in my sleep ; she is the object of my dreams, my vows, my desires, the arbiter of my destiny, my pleasures, my life. As fair as Venus, tender as Psyche, but, alas ! less susceptible to the emotions of the senses than those of the soul, I think she shares, if not my ardour, at any rate, my passion. I breathe only because I believe her ; I aspire to love her only because I can rejoice in the assurance of her love ; in a word, I live for her, by her. . . . If there is not cause for jealousy in all this . . . *à la bonne heure !* but I swear by yourself, and by your daughter, and by my honour, that such are my sentiments for her ; they will not die till I die, and I would not change one of them for the throne of the universe ! Forgive me, that you should force me thus naïvely to declare my feelings ; but, without grudging, give me, I beg, with that indiscretion you so thoughtfully reminded me of, those kisses that draw up the waters of my soul and join them to your own. . . . Ah ! my Sophie, can you not see that it is because I know you to be so indiscreet that I trust to your discretion ? *Addio, sposa adorata.*

XXXV

The good angel informed me, a few days ago, that he had been so kind as to have my daughter

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

brought to him, to see for himself how she was. He found her very bright and fresh looking, plump without being too plump, with nearly all her teeth, and not at all shy. He added that he left the pleasure of filling in the details to you; and you have not done so! Was your last letter written before she came? I cannot assure myself on this point, as your letter has already been taken from me. Tell me all you know. Ah! my love, I live in my child. The good angel says nothing of her face or of her chatter; but for certain she is pretty, since she is your daughter, and garrulous, since she is mine.—Our friend told me yesterday that he was of the opinion that I ought to persevere, although he does not seem to have thought of sending me this letter: that I could and ought to trust that my interests were not being neglected in another quarter, and that a town attacked at two points was not likely to hold out for long. What is certain is that I count only on M. Lenoir and on him.

Oh! yes, my darling, Gabriel-Sophie is mine, and what is more she is the fruit of my love. I am surer of this than I am of my very existence, and this certainty is the mainstay of my life. Dear child! how unhappy should I be were it not for her! In reality, I am harassed and badgered overmuch by fate, and on account of my poor health. Tell me what worse I should have to undergo were I old and infirm. Maybe I should be an idiot, and pious, occupied incessantly with my devotions. Instead, I have an imagination that consumes me,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

a soul that out-wears its covering, a heart full of love and love so unhappy that the sentiment, at once so consolatory and so sweet when not entirely without hope, is one of thorns and brambles. Ah! who knows but that the prickly thorn-bush which I fain would penetrate does not conceal a precipice and that, all unwitting, I am not hurrying to my doom? Someone advised me, not so long ago, to *try* devotion. The proposal appeared to me a strange one. I replied simply: 'I have no crimes I wish to expiate.' Why should I weary myself with religious observances, and adopt the absurd and dangerous principle that they put everything right: I have but one pleasure, one interest, one passion, pure, sacred, and immortal: the religious yoke would be of no use to me whatever; and, in truth, it is not worth while to tie oneself down for nothing. I hope, my Sophie, that as long as you remain faithful to me, you will never turn pious, because, with your intelligence, you could only be devout for convenience sake, to sanctify your infidelities, and to purge yourself of your crimes. Hitherto so pure, so chaste, so passionate, what need have you to divert yourself with superstitious beliefs? Why create a fantastic being, and ask his pardon for faults you never have committed? Why place your obedience in the hands of pious reconcilers, in order to obtain a reconciliation which you neither need nor desire? GABRIEL.

Remember that your letter seemed far too short and too hastily written.—I cannot conceive any-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

thing that you might say about the good angel that you cannot say. Nothing bores me that gives me pleasure, and the *many things* you so kindly allude to would have done me a great deal of good.

Farewell, my well-belovéd. Ask the good angel for the hair and beat him if he has thrown it in the fire, especially as he wears a wig himself, young as he is. He owes you six locks, of which one that I sent you was enormous. *Dam mi un bacio infiammato che non mai finisca.*

XXXVI

July 30th 1779.

How lucky for you that the good angel is not of your sex! What a rival you would have! I asked him for your letter yesterday; he sent it me to-day, (for the 1st of August), a charming letter, so sad, so tender, so short, but so charming and so worthy of my incomparable Sophie; it is thus that he speaks of you. Ah! yes, you are that, in your love, your generosity, your virtues; if others are capable of such love, you alone have been put to such tests as place you infinitely above those who only feel that they would have the courage to resist them, were they tried.

I know M. Lenoir thought me a devil; he has been told so many things that he no longer believes anything! It is true that I am prodigiously impatient of little things, but master of myself in great matters. I like to see you doing justice to

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

me, because my conscience confirms your testimony. I do not think I have come to blows more than twice in my life when I have been in the wrong, and I have too much respect for myself, and for mankind in general, to be of a combative disposition. The vivacity of my speech makes me appear hot-headed to those who do not know me. I am very fiery under the surface, but, as you say, I alone suffer for it. The truth is that Madame de Mir . . . and company have found it very convenient to saddle me with this reputation, and they must have succeeded strangely well in their intention for anyone to suspect me of beating you. . . . I beat you! Good God! You, one look from whom burns me like fire, and moves me to infinite pity! You, who can never give me a kiss without plunging me into an ecstasy of love! You, from whose eyes a single tear cannot fall without rending my heart in twain! . . . Beat you! How can they think that a man who is not without bravery nor a stranger to generosity, could beat a woman! To hear of an attack by the stronger sex on the weaker has always filled me with most profound anger. I have never seen a woman insulted even though I did not know her, without either defending or avenging her. And yet Madame de Mir . . . has had a blow from me; you know why; it became necessary for me either to drive her from my house or to put myself in the wrong; my first impulse, and my first impulses are never evil, was to adopt the former plan rather than raise an ignominious and irreparable scandal. The woman said to me once: I know perfectly well that

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

you will end by having me shut up. . . . No, replied I, calmly, I would kill you rather. . . . I have no doubt but that she thought this an atrocious answer; for my part I think it an honest and quite a natural one. I knew it was said that I beat you; but that 'we beat each other,'—I can hardly say I thought they went as far as that. Ah! yes, we beat each other; often, with all our might!

You defend yourself in all seriousness on the matter of the letters; far more seriously than I attacked you. You must admit that in days gone by, short letters were your pet failing; I know, and am very grateful to know, that you have corrected the fault; but nevertheless, since your conversion to a more lengthy epistolary style, I have frequently received some two and a half pages, three, three and a half, and that is all too short for me. Although the good angel now serves us with complaisance, it is certain that we still write to one another too infrequently to be satisfied with mere notes; reckon how you will, I send you ten times more than you send me; and yet I am very nearly blind. You have had in the course of your lifetime letters from me of nine or ten pages, so minutely written that forty of yours would not contain what one of mine contained; when have you ever outdone me?

I must at last set myself seriously to remedy my maladies, in spite of my rooted dislike of dosing myself with medicine. My chest burns so that one would never think I was the most phlegmatic of men. But the mischief is that my wretched stomach

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

won't get used to emulsions. It is very trying to have to deal with two enemies. Your former lover, M. Dorat, has addressed an epistle to his stomach: he has cause for complaint against it; it is an unfortunate companion when working ill; but one must put up with such tribulations if one wants to serve five mistresses. Alas! I have and ever shall have but one, and even that one *I have not*. It is therefore gratuitous and very unjust for me to suffer the same fate as the *petit-maitre* Dorat; and yet I do not chant my miseries; I do not address a list of my indigestions to the universe; but great men succeed, by means of engravers, in interesting the world even in the grossest details.

Farewell, my one and only love, farewell, the woman of all women whom I adore and reverence. A truce to quarrels; remember that if I sadden you at any time, it is upon my grief and pain that you must lay the blame, not my temper. No matter what it is, however trifling it may appear to you, who see it close at hand, send me every detail; it is the only way of solacing my heart; I have every confidence in your affection and your honesty. Farewell, my bride, my life; I press your rosy lips to mine, and give you my soul, in exchange for your own.

GABRIEL

I signed my family name inadvertently; I wish to bear none but that of your husband.

D. P. did not in any way insist that I should write to Madame de Mir . . .

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

D. P. seems to me to be in love with you; but he says you are indiscreet to publish your favours abroad, and that you ought not to have told me you had written to him. He has reproached me for having lost so excellent a wife. I told him that you were the only one who had the right or the power to absolve or condemn me. It would be as well for you to explain this to him; but do not write anything to him without consulting me first; for this reason, that I think your mother hears more than we think, through my father. You can look upon him as quite incapable of making a wrong use of your letters, and, in general, of anything in the least dishonest.

He has not written to Madame de Vence, because she has completely broken with Madame de Mir . . . I can believe it; it was more than likely that she would.

The history of my hair would appear to be turning into a very strange one. The good angel tells me to-day that he is sure he received the eight locks and sent them on, and it is that that makes him anxious, provided they have not yet reached you, because he is not certain that he did not send some letters with them at the same time. Find out definitely if all has been faithfully remitted to you, and be very firm about it. You can be *en tout sûreté*.—The interest, the FRIENDSHIP of MADEMOISELLE D. ought to be something very fine! the big words are, certainly; why not say '*her kindnesses*' as well?—My health would be good, if you would let me sleep, but you fire me with passion even more,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

if that is possible, at a distance than close at hand; because then you put out the fire from time to time; as it is, you do nothing but fan the flames.— A pretty wit you have, you women! You all say to us: 'I want you to be jealous; it is a sign of love; but take care only to be jealous for good reason. . . .' Now, on your own showing, we never have reason; therefore, etc., etc. Farewell, FOOLISH MARIE THERESE.

Sophie-Gabriel, do you want *un bacio di colomba*?

I intended to add to this a copy of a heated and strongly-worded epistle that I have just written to Dupont; but, my love, this is the thirty-third page I have written since yesterday morning, and I do not want to miss sending you '*Le pouvoir de l'harmonie*,' which is not without a certain merit. I have said to D. P., quite simply, that my plan was a very wise one, save for two circumstances, one of which was purely the fault of my father, who might also atone for the other; that is to say, that the author of the execution in effigy ought to die under the stick, or grant you the most favourable reparation possible; and that if they wanted me to remain quiet, they must leave you in peace at the convent. He has agreed.

XXXVII

July 16th, 1779.

The good angel sent on your letter yesterday, my dear, dear love; your letter is as amiable as

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

yourself, although in truth it contains but six pages, with the lines very far apart; but then that is more than four, and if it is little to me, it is at least a great deal for the poor angel whom I overwhelm with masses of my handwriting, who encroaches on his night's rest in order to answer me and help me in my affairs, and who combines with all the enchantment of friendship the charm of kindliness. He is continually at work on my behalf, always with the same attentiveness and the same zeal; but I very much doubt whether those of whom I have a right to expect much more second him with equal zeal and good faith: this good and wise friend helps me in many ways. He asks me to display the patience of a saint. I am not a saint, nor do I want to be one; for, as I tell him, a saint's is a silly profession; but I have the patience born of courage, which is quite another thing.

I cannot yet speak to you on the subject of inoculation; the good angel has not said a word to me about it; and yet the matter is urgent, and worries me. Speak to him about it, and beg him so to arrange matters that the nurse may be with the child; it is the only right and wise course, but it will cost money. Do you think Madame de R. would pay it?—I admit that I have not thought of writing to M. de Mari. . . . In the first place, it goes so much against the grain for me to write to him that I could hardly be expected to be in a hurry to do so; in the second, M. de Mari has been so unkind, on the strength of the first letter I

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

wrote him from here, as to obtain an order forbidding me to write to him at all. Do you think such a proceeding likely to encourage me to make advances towards him?—I send you back D. P.'s letter; it is a good letter; I realised a long time ago that the fair sex are wonderful letter-writers. My love, the justification you deign to make, on the subject of this imagined precipice, on the brink of which I am supposed to have *sacrificed* you (big words round a period off at very little cost), this justification, I say, is charming, and I would you had written it to philosopher Dupont as naively as you have to me. I can call to mind a more touching phrase still that you wrote to me one day on this subject: 'A man presents us with a magnificent palace; must we blame him if it is struck by lightning and we meet our death therein?' It is certainly true, my best beloved, that it is very unjust for a man to censure our conduct who is unable to appreciate our passion, for he who does not know what a tyrant love is, or what an excuse love gives a man, cannot judge of any of our steps, any of our sentiments, any of our thoughts; we speak another language; we inhabit another world. O love, love of my heart! how true it is that their brilliant baubles will never afford them the least part of our happiness! Genius, philosophy, success, glory, renown, what are you to a kiss from my Sophie? What are you to one of her glances? And what to me is posterity, public opinion, fortune and time, when I can read her love in her eyes, whilst her melodious accents

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

enchant my intoxicated soul? O the joy of fruition! the joy of fruition! . . . how many lives would I not give for the joy of fruition! But what precedes this joy, and above all, what follows upon it, that sweet languor, that unburdening of one's heart upon another's, that unalterable confidence, that union of souls that alone produces and prolongs desire! . . . Oh! that is happiness, that is happiness supreme, and it is that which I invariably find by my Sophie's side!

Very well then, if you do not want me to write you thirty-three pages, then you mustn't love me so well. For the last five days I have not put down my pen until far into the night. My eyes and my chest can hardly stand the strain; but let us be patient.—Yes, madam, yes, Maria Angela is a very pretty name; and whenever I was jealous of anyone (which was not very often, for I was of a very lukewarm disposition) she used to insult my rival, or box his ears, or calmly propose, in good Italian, that I should stab him through the heart. I, poor Frenchman that I was, I would have stabbed her as well as I could for the price of her love, but that did not affect me very deeply; it would have frightened me, very likely, to have loved her thus. I do not offer her as a model; if you were to stab all those of whom I am jealous, there would soon only be us two left in the world.—I send you back D. P.'s letter: keep it, together with everything that closely concerns you and me, and at the same time keep a copy of your reply.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

Write to M. L. N. at once about your wishes concerning your daughter, since the good angel advises you to do so. Make him speak out once for all on the subject of inoculation, which, like a fool, I proposed for him to get done in Paris, where it is forbidden, as well as about the possibility or impossibility of your giving your daughter to G. If you were to put her in Saint-M., you would have to write to M. de Monbourg, grand-vicar of the diocese of Sens, and M. L. N., who knows him, might perhaps deign to speak to him about her himself. If you do not want to put her there, make up your mind where you would like to have her; for I do not want her to remain at la Barre after January. I do not want it, I say, for many reasons. I do not know whether D. P. would bring her to G., I am sure, but I hardly think he would. It would be far too public a proceeding. Not a good idea on your part! Mademoiselle Diot and the nurse would be all that would be necessary for so short a journey, which could be made in two days by barge.

I must stop, dear love; I must stop, or be the death of the good angel and myself. And you say the only person who has a right to kill me is yourself. Ah! it would be very easy for you, and as easy to restore me my life. I know no Thessalian cleverer at this sort of metamorphosis than yourself. Farewell, my darling; farewell, beloved of Gabriel. Every day you put fresh chains about me, chains of gratitude and love. Ah! it is long now that I have been heavy laden with your chains; I cannot escape from you if I would. Add to the

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

sweet burden; increase my never-to-be-acquitted debt; believe me, it is sweet to confess that I am all powerless ever to pay it. Farewell, my bride and my love. . . . You have no cause to quarrel with me, and you know it.—Never have you received *one* paltry kiss from your insatiable Gabriel; never believe that two years of widowhood, of cruel widowhood, have rendered him less tender and less ardent. Let me know if your daughter shows any promise of intellect.

XXXVIII

August 29th, 1779.

I got your letter yesterday evening, and covered it with so many kisses that you ought to be jealous. Not but what there is plenty to find fault with in it! Why take up a lot of space over copying out letters which you must surely know have of necessity passed through the hands both of the good angel and of myself? The wit of Dupont, and even the wit of Madame Sophie, when she is not writing to *me*, does not interest me enough to make me prefer such rhetoric to simple tenderness, which is more precious to me than anything else in the world, saving her presence. If I send you copies of letters with their replies, it is because you cannot obtain them except through me, and because I want you in everything and for all time as my guide, my witness and my judge; but, provided you make the request once and for all to D. P., your letters will all come back to me; they can never take the place of your

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

love. . . . This is perhaps a strange beginning to a letter which ought to be kept sacred to the most tender expressions of gratitude; but I have already made them. When you received D. P.'s answer to your eloquent and generous-minded letters, you also had four marginal memoranda from me, in tiny scribble, wherein I delivered myself up, in the first moments of my emotion and my love, to all the sentiments with which you also, it is true, constantly inspire me, but which the admiration of my friends had at that moment called forth. The good angel must have laughed at my trick; you may take vengeance on him by playing him another trick, that is to say by replying to this scrap of a letter: you see that in all conscience I have reason to scold you; I thanked you and caressed you to begin with and you feel no compunction in being fondled after or even during a lecture; for, as you said to me one day so appositely, you get off by closing my mouth with a kiss, which you can prolong until the desire and the strength to speak have passed. . . . See how implacable, how formidable are Sophie's revenges! . . . But you know that I have quite as vindictive a humour as you. You will therefore not get off so lightly as you think, for this is the penitence I impose upon you. I have for some long time, my guilty friend, seen with horror and regret that you contemplate an impenitent death with unruffled calm. Wicked little worldling! You are possessed of the demon of love and seem to have made a pact with him. Resolved to work out your salvation at any price, and to restore you to the

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

paths of virtue in order that I may myself once more enjoy the good graces of your very dear, very honoured, very pious mother, I have consulted various casuists; I have perused the Holy Fathers and thumbed the decrees of the Council; I have looked up the most powerful exorcisms; and I have made a *resumé* of my research, holy, salutary, with which I have great hopes of converting you. The good angel, moved by similar sentiments, touched by my zeal, desirous himself of taking part in the winning of so noble a soul to God, has taken upon himself to see that you get the mass of ritual; and, since it turns out to be a thick, voluminous mass, you must keep a look-out for it; it will come by coach or messenger; it is too big a parcel for the post. Read an anthem every morning, and every evening as well; meditate upon it, digest it; I do not despair of you by any means. You will see that the title of the volume is: 'Heures de Sophie.' It is a striking witness, a lasting monument of the holiness of my intentions, the purity of my vows. . . . Such, my dear love, is the penitence I have prepared for you. I had intended to add a little scourge; but it has been forgotten; I will send it separately, to urge my pious projects still more fervently.—I have no more to say to you on the fine plan you have conceived; it is a truly noble one, and entirely worthy of you; but, of course, it cannot be realised for a long time to come. I have given you my reasons at length, and have not hesitated to share the opinion of D. P., especially as it is also that of the good angel; D. P. has felt the dignity and

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

delicacy of your step as much as I do. O my Sophie! you astonish others, but you no longer astonish me in anything you do. . . . Your Gabriel knows you too well! Simply write to D. P. urging him to make his attack on Madame de Mir . . . direct. Delay is injurious to my cause, and serves no purpose whatever. If she is left to wallow in the selfishness that is natural to her, she will become harder and harder to move. I know that eventually I shall be able to leave here without her intervention; but, besides the tediousness of waiting, the lady is dangerous to me in other respects. I shall not see D. P. again before the end of September. Do not leave him alone till then; the importunities of women are never disagreeable; those of my sex leave a bitter taste in the mouth, and are seldom taken in good part.

I insist on the world knowing that you are a mother; silence might have an ill effect on your daughter's career. But do not shock Madame de R. by telling her about your uncertainty with regard to the custody of your daughter. It would be a strange reason for refusing you the custody, to allege that the circumstances of your motherhood were notorious.—It seems to me that Mademoiselle de la R. knows very little about the art of loving. How can one ask of two people who have conceived a mutual passion what one would do if the other were drowning in his sight? To have any doubt as to the answer reflects more on the questioner than on those to whom the question is put.—You have spoken to me so often about *devotion*

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

lately that I begin to think you have really combined with the good angel to make a saint of me. You think you will be able to judge of the state of my soul by my profession of faith, for which you have already asked me twice and which I have never had time to make, because all these discussions, so immense, and so difficult as they are, are after all of little avail, provided one strives to be faithful and honest in oneself. An ancient philosopher was once asked by a king to explain the essence of the Deity, and he petitioned for a little time to think of what he should say. When that time had expired he asked for a little longer. At length, urged to explain his views on the subject, Simonides said to Hieron: 'The more I study the question, the more do I find it beyond me.' . . . And I think Simonides said well.—Do you want long words, fine words? Racine will tell you, in speaking of God, that: 'The eternal is His name, the world His work.'—A fine line, but a poor definition. Do you want something still grander and less vague? Read the inscription engraved, so Plutarch tells us, upon the Temple of Sais: 'I am all that has ever been, that is, and that ever will be; no mortal man has ever lifted my veil. . . .' One can hardly conceive a more sublime confession of invincible ignorance. I know exactly how you feel about it yourself, you who like to proceed from one step to another, and can take nothing on trust. We must, say you, first prove there is a God and then explain what God is. Maybe the one is no easier than the other; to demonstrate the existence of God by directing the

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

attention to a nature infinitely perfect, that is to say, by a direct proof, by reasoning drawn from the nature of the subject itself, is to suppose a conception of the infinite which is inconceivable; it is to establish as a fact what is still a matter of question, and this sort of proof is, to say the least, unsatisfactory.—To demonstrate the existence of God by that of the world and the universe, that is to say, indirectly, is a very difficult task; the simple laws derived from form and matter demand some first primeval movement: but whether that first movement is God or not, I cannot say.—If we do not know by direct evidence of the senses that there is a God, judge of the efforts of those who pretend to know His nature. The ancients considered matter eternal, because it is evident that, since something exists, something must always have existed. Matter and form were composed, according to them, of certain simple constituents which they called *elements*, from different combinations of which all natural things derived their shape and qualities. To evolve from that a universal All, a God, is surely a long step; though it is, to my mind, quite as reasonable a step as any other. But perhaps Sophie will tell me what she thinks? Is there a God, or is there not? Does He concern Himself with the affairs of this world, or does He not? I can only reply, quite simply: ‘I do not know’: four great words, these, believe me. I do not know, nor am I at all concerned about my ignorance, because I feel it is impossible to know more than I do know, and that my good faith, my sentiments, my intentions, can-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

not be displeasing to an all-just Being, if such exist. I know not whether He exists, nor how He exists; but I do know that if there be a God, a good and just man cannot but be a pleasing thing in His eyes. I know that if there be no God, still the good and just man will be the happier, even though he be persecuted for righteousness' sake, for the testimony of his conscience will soften his ills, just as it doubtless poisons the so-called felicity of the wicked man. I know I stand better with myself, and am more beloved of my mistress, when I have been striving after virtue: that is enough for me; virtue shall be my idol. . . .

Remember that I do not want you to work at night under any pretext whatever. Rest as much as you can, I implore you, and don't forget that you won't always be twenty.

Surely the silence of M. Bouch . . . will do your daughter's reputation no good. She has more intelligence than all the forty academicians, who have the intelligence of four, as Piron used to say; she knows all the languages already and has plenty of talents, only she has the wickedness or the modesty to hide them. But patience: you are quite right in thinking F . . . will tell me she resembles me in every detail. Farewell, best beloved; I have come to the end sooner than I thought I should, because, what with D. P. and what with my stomach, I have been delayed; an hour by the former, and by the latter, which is not in very good order, thanks to peaches and melons, I have been prevented from

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

writing altogether for the first hour after dinner. But I must write another word or two to the good angel, although it is true I wrote him a long letter this morning; I want this to go off early to-morrow morning, so that our kind friend may have time to read it and send it off again on Tuesday.

Farewell, my dear and tender love. Do not make me copies of any letters but your own in future; send me D. P.'s letters as they are, simply, and tell him himself to show everything he writes to the good angel and to Gabriel; rob your husband, your tender, loving husband, of no more of your handwriting, I beseech you; I adore you with all the strength of my soul, and only know happiness in love, its projects, hopes, gifts, favours, faithfulness and constancy.

XXXIX

September 9th, 1779.

Yes, indeed, you have quite seen what I meant; a fine complaisance, worth a supplement of two and a half pages to me! though it is true they are little pages, short pages, and the writing is very big. . . . I have not heard from you for nineteen days; why a *supplement*, I ask? I wanted a letter, not a supplement. It was hardly worth while to make me wait fourteen days, from the 25th of August to the 7th of September, for a little note, sweet enough, it is true, but worth very little in the eyes of a famished lover. I can quite believe that you are satisfied; you have just received a

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

long letter from Gabriel; I look upon your letter to me as a mere nothing; it has given me the thirst of Tantalus, and that is all.

I have half a mind to leave your note unanswered; its curttness offends my eye, yet—it behoves me to speak to you of your daughter. The idea of having her inoculated by F . . . has come to me too. The good angel has taken it up, and has authorised a visit to la Barre; the patient should always be examined before undergoing such an operation. The little one is very well, and seems to have a very healthy constitution; she is as rosy as you could wish, strong limbed and vigorous, but not too vigorous, which is often dangerous. She has just had a slight ailment, following on what the nurse calls chicken-pox, but which is nothing more than a rash which comes with the cutting of teeth. She has only sixteen teeth, so far: the gums are swollen, she will soon have some more through. This is an unanswerable objection to going on with the inoculation just at present. Another reason is that she ought not to leave her nurse just yet, before she is weaned. F . . . can see her again in October; dentition, if not finished, ought to be completely suspended before she is inoculated. Your daughter is very pretty, therefore she is not like me. Do you recognise this little piece of ivory that I have kissed so many times, and which I am still kissing? Well! this little piece of ivory is a very bad portrait of your daughter; nor is that to be wondered at, for this becurled

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

image is only a very ugly likeness of you. The resemblance is striking, according to F . . . , so striking that he would have picked her out among a thousand children. But as I am to a certain extent her father, she has other qualities in my eyes, which are as follows: she is turbulent, naughty and noisy as a legion of little demons; she stamps her foot, screams, makes a scene, and I even think she has been known to swear . . . ; she takes wine so eagerly that F . . . was obliged to take his mug away from her; she half emptied it in no time. She is for ever repeating: 'I will, I will, I will . . . panpan, pan . . . ' A language rich in sounds, is it not? She adds 'Papa, Mama,' occasionally. She is very free with her kisses to men; calls F . . . her 'country-father'; beats him, and little Thérèse as well, if he chance to kiss Thérèse, etc., etc., etc. Is she not a charming little person? To sum up, she is frolicsome, mischievous, quick as a salamander, but withal a good child, giving freely of herself, but taking, too, whatever pleases her fancy, though they be *brioche*s as big as herself; it is a law of nature! She allowed her little mouth to be examined without giving any trouble, and her lovely little body, which is as white as snow, without a blemish anywhere. She holds herself very erect, a very well-knit little figure; she has black eyebrows and eyelashes, the latter very long; a mass of dark brown hair which will soon be black; very pretty features, for they are your own, and even more regular; but her eyes are neither yours nor mine; if they cannot be called small, they are

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

certainly smaller than yours. F . . . considers her a charming child, and I can believe it, since she is yours; up to now there is nothing to show my share in her creation, but never mind. . . . Ah! Sophie, forgive her for resembling you: my prayer is answered; she can never be anything but very dear to me. How could so tender a lover be a bad painter?

I heartily agree with you that it would be a very good thing if we were put in the same cell together; perhaps some day you will propose it to Madame de R . . . Bear it in mind; do you think she might agree? She would be doing very wisely if she did, for we would let her brew what mischief she liked after that. . . . But our sins? . . . our sins! Now we do nothing but realise the sins of the imagination; there would not be much difference therefore; what there was would be to the advantage of our salvation, for now we desire with all our might to commit a sin, and if we were together, we should feel we must strive to repress such criminal desires. For myself, if they would consent to give me such a companion for my captivity, I would promise never in my lifetime to ask for my liberty. Have you equal courage, my Sophie?

The departure of Madame de Sainte-S . . . is nothing less than certain; but my daughter is a difficulty. I very much doubt if we shall be allowed the delight of having her ourselves. Madame de R . . . will utter a yell, and carry her off. You would do well not to importune M. Lenoir about this, for fear the good angel may put a stop to it

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

altogether. We will place her where best we can. The inoculation will be done under the rose; but we shall know of it in plenty of time to pay for having it done.

Farewell, dear mistress. *Independently of the certificate of health given me by D. P.*, I am wonderfully well, except my eyes, which are failing me so rapidly that it hardly seems worth while to do anything for them; for what would be the good? Although I find that I feel to-day far more generously disposed towards you than you deserve, it is *in advance* that I lavish on you all those tender caresses which you may reckon on receiving in reality one day, just as I reckon on giving them to you other than by letter, alas! alas! This letter would have been longer if I had not wanted to send you a very fine dithyramb to the shades of Voltaire, which has just taken the prize at the Academy. It has wasted my time and my eyesight and my letter. . . . But then, do you deserve any more? No, and it is only to heap coals of fire on your head that I embrace you. Tell the good angel that he is a knave.

XL

September 11th, 1779.

I beg you most earnestly to leave your monk to sulk, and not by any means to suffer him to pay you a special visit, nor even to take dinner with you in company with others.

How kind of you to permit the caresses I lavish

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

on your letters! I hoped to receive a set of moving stanzas on the subject of my infidelity. . . . Ah! Sophie! you know I love but you; that I caress but what comes from you, or what you order me to caress. Your lover is but a tool in your hands. You have his soul; it is one with yours. You direct his will simply by showing him your opinion; he can no more separate himself from his feelings for you than he can isolate himself from himself. You are mistress of his senses; you rule his soul; you put life into his heart. It is in you that his being lies, it is to you that his being is consecrate.

The good angel has not let me have M. Lenoir's portrait of you; it is surely forgetfulness on his part; there can hardly be any objection to my having on the wall of my room a likeness of her whose image I carry ever in my heart. Can I not buy the engraving like any other, and copy it? Moreover, it is not a gift on M. Lenoir's part; only a desire to earn my gratitude evinced by one who is satisfied with your love.

I think M. Bon . . . must have laughed more at the trick he has played us than at that we have played on him. He is a Jew, ignorant of the meaning of shame. Imagine, dear Sophie, he wanted to make your note count for a letter! He did not dare to say so in so many words, but he 'acted as such.'

O love! dear love! Have you at last acquired my vindictiveness! Alas! how long have I found you sweet-tempered as a sheep, sweet even to the extent of indifference! You call yourself a woman

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

of fire. . . . You. . . . I have never seen your heart on fire yet.

You will notice, my dear tender love, that although I keep my hand on all the ropes that may be likely to save me from shipwreck, I should be as foolish as I should be unnatural if I were to refuse to soften at the idea of my father's return; I have no longer any fear of meeting with your disapproval.

It is certain that one must have a very lofty mind sincerely to love to hear home-truths. Vanity hardens itself against anything that shocks it; it takes care first to seduce the heart, and, when the heart is affected, the mind has little chance. All my life, with my friends, I have always adopted the innocent ruse of maintaining a discreet silence on delicate points that were, after all, only of secondary importance to them. But I have never been able, with anyone in the world, to say what I did not think, and I venture to maintain that I deserve a certain amount of indulgence for my rustic veracity; I have always embraced truth bravely.

What merit attaches to myself, I pray, in regard to those actions of which you are so proud, and which for nine months comprised my happiness? Is it worth while to revel in felicity awhile? Whose society could be sweeter than yours? What a soul, what a mind you have, to adorn my lot withal, and reward me for longing to be happy! Do you think I don't know that you brought to our union in-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

finitely more sweetness, equability, amenity than I? You are as full of feeling as your husband, and in you there is to be found a strange union of qualities, for never were disposition and character at once so unutterably sweet as yours. . . . And I made a furious effort to live happily with you? No, Sophie, no: it is not for that you ought to thank me, but for having appreciated you as you deserve, known you soon enough not to hesitate to place my fate at your mercy. Had you been but an ordinary woman, I should have been the most unfortunate of men. But my heart read yours aright; and therein lies my merit, my happiness and my glory. What a delicious expression! '*We are not even with Fortune. . . .*' Oh! no, my Sophie! that we are not; I shall never be. What then can be the extent of the happiness of loving and being loved by you!

.
I have told you very precisely that my daughter does not resemble me, but that she resembles, as one drop of water to another, the owner of a naughty little *retroussé* nose that I have occasionally found in my path and kissed, who, I know not how, has made an attack on my happiness to the extent of presenting me with a child. Do you know who it is? It is useless for you to deny it, my dear Sophie; she is your image, feature for feature; she has your complexion, your countenance, and, in a word, she is like you in every possible detail. F . . . found her very like your portrait, strikingly like in one respect; but far prettier, for, as a fact, the

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

portrait is a very ugly likeness of yourself. But I, whose brush was guided by love; I who worked on such a very fine canvas, I have painted far better than Auvert. I have already told you that unless you want to grieve over my happiness, you ought to congratulate me on her resemblance to yourself and rejoice in it. Oh! why envy me for having two Sophies? My stomach is too healthy; all of me is too healthy; ah! much too healthy; healthy enough to lead me into wearying, insipid rigmaroles—except my eyes, my one good point; they are in a very bad state.

I did not come across the good angel at the fête de Vincennes. It seems to me you might have been able to call yourself the mother of your daughter, without telling your mother about it; she is bound to make a scene. If you speak of convents, mention Saint-M . . . , where, tell her, there are a number of children, and where you know one of the nuns. Get her to consent to some convent; for, decidedly, I have no desire for my daughter to grow up a peasant, and if we don't take care we shall quarrel over this. Farewell, my dear, dear love; I hasten to send you this (R . . . has delayed it enough already), for I want to retract what I said about the *supplement*; I scolded you in spite of myself and against my principles; I want, too, to let you have D. P.'s letter, and, finally, and above all, I want to give you pleasure, the pleasure you always profess to experience on reading anything of mine. Ah! why can I not give you a greater pleasure still, that of hearing me call you my

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

well-belovéd, my spouse, my mistress, my supreme good, the unique end of my existence! GABRIEL.

Would it be impossible for your Emilie to paint your child in pastel, now that she has been promoted to a definite little face?

I send you no loose sheets, because I know nothing suitable to quote for the moment, nor have I any time to do so; this will be the first time I have not sent any.

XLI

September 24th, 1779.

Scold, scold, scold away, dear love; it is your turn; but you ought to chaff rather than scold: for the paltry tale which you put forward as your defence has not even the shadow of common-sense; but if I did not think you prettier when you scold than when you are sweet-tempered, I would not put up with being found fault with; for, at heart, I have never given credence to this tale; and, although I could make no reply to D. P.'s formal statement, my heart said *no* right enough; how could I dare to accuse or even to suspect a brother of the vilest of low behaviour, without very strong proof? In truth, I have still to conceive how the idea of such a myth can enter the mind without sullyng the heart, and how a man can be so perverse as to dare to confess, even to himself, to having formed a plan to injure an

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

unfortunate man from whom he has received nothing but good, and to whom he is bound by the closest of blood ties; and you wanted me to entertain the idea of imputing such a plan to him? I lost myself for a time in the mass of contradictory ideas that agitated me; but the good angel can bear witness that the first word of my letter in reply to that received from D. P. was: 'Do not judge Sophie before hearing her, my dear friend.' And in the same letter I went on to say that: 'I would wager my head that it was not she whom the chevalier saw; I would wager too, but something that I hold less dear than my head in this case, that she has not written to him'; but, dear love, the world does not know you as I know you; and, in writing thus to you, you may think I impute a falsehood to you; it would be better to leave the enlightenment to come of itself and write to you simply as one of the world. Scoff at D. P. if you like; but not at me, nor even at the good angel, although he believed this fandango in all seriousness. Would you know how he has repaired his error? by sending me two of your letters in four days. At this cost, I wish he had an error to repair every day of the week. It reminds me of the way in which the senators of Venice once punished the immortal Galileo. In the course of a visit to the university of Padua made by the three procurators of Saint Mark's, who form a special tribunal, established *per la riforma dello studio di Padoa*, one of Galileo's colleagues, who was a Jesuit and jealous, accused

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

him in full assembly, in his presence, of keeping one woman at Padua, another at Gambarata, whither he used to go to spend his holidays, and a third at Venice, where he was in the habit of visiting frequently. Called upon by the magistrate to answer the accusation, he replied, quite simply, that he had needs which he had to satisfy, needs which he had in common with his accuser, and that he never troubled himself about the way in which his accuser satisfied his. Upon this confession the *riformaton* conferred together and the president pronounced sentence, saying that in view of the insufficient number of appointments for the satisfying of the needs of the accused, the republic saw fit to double them, and exhorted him to make good use of his opportunities. What is the meaning of this burning, my darling? Why burn your beautiful arms? Why spoil the loveliest skin love has ever formed? Do not neglect it, I pray. Burns are often long in healing, painful and dangerous if not properly attended to.

The good angel is right. He wrote to me yesterday, saying that quarrels over words were all very well in the hands of women; and that I ought to leave you to have it out with D. P., for you were so well equipped for the fray that it would be a sin to deprive you of so easy a victory. Consequently, I remain neutral; you know what sort of neutrality mine is. Be honest, because you ought never to be anything else; do not make jokes with double meanings for he is sure to take them ill, but go your own way; I would rather you bothered

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

him than I, since he deserves it. I only hope he will not insist on the fulfilment of a promise I have made hundreds of times, on which I put no restriction beyond that which good sense and justice alone dictated; but he is a lazy fellow, and slow to perceive his remissness, and (for I know the commentary you are likely to make on his actions) will be at pains to find suitable pretexts for his sloth. When I read his letters, paragraphed like a sermon, I am reminded of another ancient anecdote, of which I was nearly a witness. A band of Paduan students, having spent a part of the night in a game they called 'Who goes there?' and disturbed the whole town with their noise, came, at about two in the morning, to the house of an old professor of the humanities, burst open the door and sent two of their number to his bedside to inform him that the whole of the university was waiting below to cut his throat unless he had the goodness to listen to what both parties had to say to him, and give his decision on an important question on which they were at the moment divided. The professor rose, donned his doctor's gown, and seated himself on a stone bench which stood by the side of the door. The spokesman of either party then proceeded to deliver a lengthy harangue on the blessings of peace, of union, of harmony among learned companies, and on the ills that dissension and discord bring to society everywhere. There was a long peroration on the confidence the university felt in the enlightenment and zeal of a professor who

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

sacrificed day and night in her service; they overwhelmed him with praise and came at length to the question, which was whether one of the less polite words of the Italian language (*cazzo*) should be written with one 'z' or with two. 'Write it with three thousand,' replied the professor, furious with anger, 'and go to the devil, accursed rabble.' You do not very closely resemble an old professor of the humanities, but you will analyse the letters of your friend D. P. very much in this way.

I am wrong; yes, I am wrong to take it ill that you send me two pages and a half while I send you volumes. To justify yourself, you make a parallel of M. D. P.'s exigence, etc. You do well not to appear amorous in any other respect, for the parallel has displeased me quite enough as it is.

Alas, yes! my love, many horrors are committed under the ægis of secrecy; less under the present government than the last, I am inclined to think, but still far too many; it is a necessity by the very nature of the jurisdiction which the government employs. Did I tell you that I saw, at the château d'If, an ancient privateer, from one of our American colonies, seventy-two years old, riddled with twenty gun-shots, loved, respected and employed by my worthy uncle? This old man, as a reward for his labours and the shedding of his blood, was once detained at the instigation of his daughter, who represented that her father's drunken habits were a public scandal; that, moreover, he might kill himself in one of his falls and he ought to be shut

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

up to prevent him from falling; in fact, this poor man, in whom there was to be found, I know, a very healthy spirit, and who was no coward, but a man of ideas and the most astonishing knowledge, gathered from his vast experiences, loved wine and brandy as only a sailor can. He did not love prostitutes so well, and his daughter was a prostitute. A sub-delegate was pleased to offer her his protection. The father had the imprudence to threaten her, and someone told her of his threat. I told you the history of Madame de Launay. You may have heard of her through one named Rivière. In 1766, he was suspected, rather than accused, together with his father, of a murder. Both of them, arrested in the King's name, were taken to Bicêtre, where the unfortunate old man died of grief and misery and the son languished for nine long years. His relations, who had in the meantime appropriated his property, affected, as is usually the case, to be very much alarmed for his fate and their own honour, if the matter came up for trial. The Essarts knew him and published a memorial in his favour. Rivière obtained permission, in 1775, to be transferred to the prison at Bayeux, where he was tried and set at liberty. Better late than never; but it is not everybody that has the strength or the weakness to be a slave ten years. I could easily fill a volume with anecdotes of this kind. Think how Jansenism alone brought to birth 80,000 *lettres de cachet*. But what we do not think enough about is this, that in the prisons of this terrible civil inquisition,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

which acts arbitrarily, innocent and guilty are huddled together in odious proximity, continually, and corruption and guilelessness sit side by side. If the prisoners are allowed to communicate with one another, the same infected atmosphere envelops them all; if they are kept apart, they become gloomy, morose, hardened.

The good angel and I have, in our efforts to please you, done rather a childish thing. I could not let you have Tibullus in my own handwriting; I had appropriated several designs, several engravings; it remained to have the whole neatly copied out. This copying has amounted to more than we thought; but at last I have got to the end of it—if I am to believe the good angel, that is; he is quite capable of telling a lie if he thinks it would please me or save me anxiety.

Is it not good of me, too, to send you a comforter, to share with you your solitude? I am sorry the book is so clumsy; perhaps it will be difficult for you to use it when you pray to God in church. I know that church is, for the most part, the theatre of your reading! I once knew a very great lady who used to read the 'Aloisia' in the triforia at Versailles, with a touching air of compunction. Perhaps you do not know the book; it is the one about which J.-J. Rousseau said so charmingly to the Archbishop of Paris: '*Monseigneur*, do not worry over the fact that your priests read my "Héloïse"; they have a potent antidote in "Aloisia."

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

XLII

I want to tell you to-day, dear love, one or two anecdotes which I have found in a collection, poor enough on the whole, but containing a few rather curious things. One gave me great pleasure, because it is a striking proof of love, afforded by a very near relation; I am glad to be able to show you how we can love in our family when we like. The Marquis de Grille was deeply in love with a beautiful maiden who died of small-pox. M. de Grille, in despair, hid himself in the church of the Jacobins of Toulouse, where the lady lay buried. In the evening a brother, whose duty it was to put oil in the lamps, was greatly surprised to see the unfortunate lover, who offered him a purse of 400 louis with one hand, on condition that he should open the tomb of Mademoiselle Daumelat for him, and with the other held a dagger to the worthy brother's heart, in case he felt like refusing the request. The monk was alone; the doors of the church were closed; what course could he adopt? He decided to lay my poor cousin a trap, into which he fell straightway, either because he was very stupid or had lost his wits in his grief. The brother told him that the stone covering the tomb was too heavy for him to lift by himself, and said that he would go and fetch some of his friends to help him. The whole community of monks shortly arrived on the scene, seized the despairing lover, and carried him forcibly back to his house. But, in spite of the

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

fact that they never for a moment lost sight of him, he managed somehow to hurl himself from a top window of the house into the street and was dashed to pieces on the pavement. You will admit, dear Sophie, that the man knew how to love. Ah! what in the world is one to do when one can see one's love no more? Is it not a crime to survive her? Another anecdote, which I am going to relate to you, deals with the means adopted by a nun to escape with her lover from the convent. It seems to me all such tales are bound to be of special interest to us. Not only did the young nun desire to flee with her love, but she wished to put him out of the reach of the law. Note her inspiration. She told her lover to obtain two good horses, and station them at a certain distance from the convent, and she would do the rest; she did not want to inform him of the way she had discovered of keeping the whole world in the dark as to her escape. One of her companions had been buried on that very day, and as the tomb had not been closed down, she entered it during the night, carried the dead body to her own cell, laid it upon the bed and set fire to it; then, by means of a ladder, she scaled the garden wall and joined her lover. The convent was soon aroused by the smell of the burning flesh, and guided by the smoke the nuns ran to her cell; and as the dead nun was dressed in the clothes of the renegade, and was already half-burnt, no one doubted but that the fugitive had fallen a victim to the flames. Many prayers were offered up on her behalf, but assuredly she stood in little

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

need of them; she was occupied with something very different from praying. The substitution of the dead body must have been a difficulty, but the idea of setting light to it seems a very good one. It is a true tale, and what cannot but astonish you is the conduct of the lovers after so bold and successful a coup. They went to a foreign land, where they were married; the man devoted himself to commerce and became very wealthy. They had several children; but the wife, after she had lost her husband, retired once more into a convent, where she made a confession that ruined the prospects of her children. She declared that she had been a nun, thus rendering the unfortunate little ones illegitimate; and the husband's family took possession of their property. Such barbarous folly to my mind spoils the finest part of the tale. I cannot read such tales as these without thinking that it is only we who were unfortunate enough to be caught after we had succeeded in effecting a happy escape. But I also observe how great a difference there is between my Sophie and the rest of her sex, and how far removed she is from the contemptible foibles or frailties of other women! What have you not sacrificed to your lover? We hear every day of nuns breaking their odious chains, and, burning rather with a passionate desire for liberty than with tenderness for a lover, directing their flight to places where high railings and wearying devotions are no more! But what have they to lose? nothing; on the contrary they have everything to gain. But my Sophie left all to fly to her

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

lover's arms, share his fate, adorn his life. . . . O my love! what a reward is yours for so much devotion, such fond love! Alas! I could die of grief for thinking of it. . . . Pardon, ah! pardon, dear mistress! Ought I to have refused the felicity that you assured me was yours as well? Could I have foreseen all the horrors that fate had in store for us? Who could have foreseen that these raving madmen would have sullied their own honour in bringing about our ruin, and that the rights of man would be violated in a land which passes for the harbour of liberty? . . . Ah! such reasons may not justify me, perhaps. . . . But let my tears bear witness to my grief and my love, let them call down your pity upon my head!

XLIII

October 9th, 1779.

Since you know of a good engraver, and you have my father's arms by you, could you not have them engraved for me on a seal, either in copper or in steel? It is rather ridiculous to think I have no coat-of-arms. Note that I do not want the rope and the badge of *Vasa* inserted, but as support, two angels covered with a robe of azure, embroidered with silver lilies. I will send you what it is likely to cost you; and, by the way, as your illness must have put you somewhat in arrear, will you not ask the good angel for some money? You must have a very bad memory, to forget our arrangement so soon.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

My dear Sophie, do not wonder at this unequal, not to say bad, handwriting. I am in the open air and there is a north wind blowing that comes straight from the devil, I should think. I persist in thinking that it will get warmer, for I do not want to retire to the galleries, although the good angel has arranged a little retreat for me, where I might light a fire if I wished. M. de Roug . . . 's plan was to force me, by refusing to allow me any such shelter, to shut myself up in my room, where I should have continued in my old way of writing and reading perpetually, and where, in consequence, I should soon have become blind. He tried all he could to effect his little plan, but he is never likely to succeed in depriving me of the kindnesses of M. Lenoir, so long as I have in him a friend who unites with much wisdom and a very conciliatory disposition all the sagacity necessary to catch sight of the horns of the beast for all that they are carefully concealed.

Your mother's remarks on the subject of your daughter do not seem to me unreasonable; but she thinks her better in health than she really is. F . . . has been to see her at last. He found her just recovering from a rather bad fever. Her temperature was normal, but she was in low spirits and very peevish; always, especially in so lively a child, a sign of ill-health. He blamed the nurse strongly that her husband had not come every fortnight, according to M. B . . . 's orders, to give an account of the child; on this occasion, among others, there had been no word said as to the child's

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

health. She made very poor excuses, but swore, as she hoped for heaven, that no one had given her orders to the contrary. F . . . gave her a crown, which the good angel insisted on restoring to him. He examined the child's burn; it is the greatest good fortune that she has not lost the use of her left hand altogether; the wound is right on the extensor nerve, and she will carry the mark of it all her life. You see what it is to entrust children to nurses. Insist gently but firmly that she must not stay in such a kennel longer than is absolutely necessary. F . . . says that it is very probable that your excessive perspiration comes from a slight fever that has escaped the notice of your doctor, because it attacks you in the night; if you are certain it is not a fever, then he says the heats are due to weakness; he advises you to eat a little at a time, often, and to take as nourishment light meats, well cooked, or better still, good fish well cooked; the Loire ought to supply you with plenty; and, until you are completely recovered, drink plenty of very good old wine. Your state of health does not please him, dear love; take great care of it. Don't think you are cured before you really are; remember that your lover's happiness is at stake as well as yours, and that these neglected germs often produce declines more serious than downright illness. O my dear good Sophie! If you could but conceive the number of bad moments I have when I think of the poor state of your health, you would watch over it as over the apple of your eye. I only know this kind of anxiety and it is a grief that completely

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

disarms me and renders me, indeed, little better than a weak woman, unbearable to myself. It is infinitely, infinitely less hard for me to suffer ill-health myself.

I do not think, dear one, that your mother much expects you to change your opinions in regard to Pont . . ., because they bear on your tenderness for your humble servant; she has already, by sad experience, learnt that when love is a passion, nothing is more constant than woman. I can quite believe that her heart alone would never lead her to divine as much, for she has never had a passion for anything except her reputation; love for her has been but an appetite, and it is certain that that kind of person is of all beings the least to be depended on: for she knows nothing of those feelings, those struggles, that sweet shame, and those delicious memories which engrave one's sentiments so indelibly upon one's soul; there only remain for her the senses and the imagination, senses governed by caprice, an imagination which uses itself up by its very ardour, and which flares up in an instant and is burnt out, so that it is easy enough, with a little management, to arrange everything decently and in order, so that Mrs Grundy need never even so much as lift an eyebrow. Ah! my love, the desire to succeed and to please is a very frivolous, very vain sentiment, devoid of tenderness, devoid of depth; it dries up the soul; it chokes one's sensibilities. Vanity, always calculating, always gauging, feeds on everything, says M. Thomas, is incensed by everything,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

and even battens on that which irritates it. This is why, dear Sophie, it absorbs everything, and destroys everything. It is absolutely incompatible, for all that your la Rochefoucauld says (he does not believe in virtue at all), with the sentiment that asks for such energy of soul, such depths and tenacity of character; with that sacred union which, by a kind of worship, consecrates a woman to her lover absolutely, transforms two wills into one, and makes two beings like one life. O love! O bride! O my all! such is our passion, born on a sudden, fed on silence, increased by strife, made more ardent by persecution. Sure of our conquest, we have been more loving than proud; but, attached one to the other by mutual sacrifices, this pride is quickly begotten by the foul breath of calumny. We know what we are ourselves, what we are to one another, what we owe to one another . . . believe me, . . . they will not defeat us. . . . O love! may I die if ever I give you evil counsel! Our position is a very delicate one; it is complicated by a thousand and one circumstances. I admire your courage. Ah! courage is the foundation of all virtue, and it is from virtue that all pleasure is born; but I shall guide your courage no longer; I am suspected, almost accused of mingling views of personal interest with the inspirations of love; I, who have never had but one interest and one desire in my life, that of her whom I love. . . . They want to make out, my Sophie, that you are the victim and plaything of a vile egoist; or rather they want, at all costs, to break the sacred knot that binds us

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

together; they would isolate you from me entirely! Ah! it is by the side of the cradle of your little child, it is in her smiles and her kisses that you can read your duty. . . . You have no such sweet sight in your eyes, you are not likely to have. . . . Very well then, seek in your passionate loving soul for the true guide of your conduct; for my part, I shall say nothing further to you; I have said everything I can say, and the day that will see a change in any of my actions, any of my sentiments, towards the mistress to whom I am indebted for everything . . . that day has not yet dawned.

Farewell, my love; farewell, my all. Follow the *régime* prescribed for you by Font . . ., and regain your health and beauty; preserve your love intact and do not fail to set a value upon your Gabriel's love for you.

All your hair is coming out; my dear Sophie, keep it for me. Why forget me so invariably when you are at your toilet? I shall have to say to you, as Renaud said to Armide: 'Turn, ah! turn on me your eyes, which bear to my soul the very frenzy of happiness! It is in my heart that you will see your image; love, with a brand of fire, has engraved there a far truer picture than is shown in your unfaithful mirror. . . . Cruel one, to disdain me; is a poor mortal not worthy to hold your eyes and possess your thoughts? then contemplate the heavens; they embellish your charms, and the jealous stars whom your beauty dims.'

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

XLIV

October 24th, 1779.

No, my dear one, no, Madame de V . . . is not wrong, it is you who, in this case, are quite wrong, and have formally violated your contract. It is only by chance, and because I have sharp ears for all that concerns you in any way, that I have learnt from F . . . , against his will, that you have been ill. I read him something in your letter of the 31st relating to your daughter; he thought I knew about your illness and said: 'Madame la Marquise is better then?' I did not miss the opportunity, as you may imagine, and I found out the truth. You must reproach yourself not only for having said nothing about it, but for being so foolish as to write till two in the morning with the fever on you. This Madame de V . . . , of whom you complain, has lessened my anxiety considerably, in letting me have news more often than I could hope from the good angel. Since you are better I may scold you, and implore you very earnestly to hold scrupulously to your engagements, and not say you are well when you are not. Look carefully to your convalescence, dear love; it falls in a bad season; in general, adopt a wiser and less confined mode of living. My dear Sophie! yours is a vigorous constitution which, in a state of moral and physical opposition, is only too subject to dangerous explosions. The theory of temperaments is founded on the diverse texture of solids, and the different

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

degrees and consistency of liquids, or, to make myself more intelligible, health depends on the maintenance of a certain proportion between the fluids and the calibre of the vessels containing them. The sanguine temperament, recognisable by a full face, firm limbs and florid complexion, requires solids of a spongy texture and rich blood, circulating freely. If you force it to stagnate by a studious and sedentary life, you go directly against nature, and undermine your chance of pleasure. We see then that those who possess the sanguine temperament, or the one in which the functions do their work with the greatest facility, are as a rule cheerful, decided and frank, while the painful and difficult exercise of the functions, as in the case of a phlegmatic temperament, reduces one to a state of indolence and timidity, which leaves its mark on the ordinary conduct of life. A phlegmatic man is practically an indifferent man, because he feels that with organs without consistency he can do hardly anything : for the watery fluids that moisten them continually deprive them of that elasticity and force that is necessary to all great movements. It would not be difficult for me to extend this very ingenious hypothesis, for which we have to thank Stahl, to all temperaments and all characters ; although I do not attribute everything, as Montesquieu does, to the influence of climate (a fruitful and specious notion which is not really his, but belongs to Hippocrates) : but I am convinced, both by my own experience and by my studies, that our tastes and humours are, up to a certain point, subordinate

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

to the disposition of our organs. You see, my Sophie, how important it is not to interfere with them. Ah! who knows whether Sophie cachochymic and ailing would love Gabriel as fondly as Sophie in good health would love him? Generally speaking, the humours of women have a greater degree of liquidity than those of men. Well constituted blood like your own, called into play by the combined forces of that innumerable quantity of little vessels which form the solid substance of sanguine temperaments, ought naturally to have an easy, uniform course, forming those lovely tints of rose and alabaster that render you so beautiful, and which it is so useless to attempt to imitate. Your temperament is the one most favourable to beauty, most appropriate to your sensibility, your brilliant imagination, your adorable gaiety. Would you rob me of all my treasures, all my little ones? . . . My love, you make a very sharp attack on me in supposing, quite gratuitously, that I have begged you to return to Pont . . . ; *gratuitously*, I say, for I have not even spoken to you about it; and you ought to know that I should never propose it so long as the advantages did not seem to me to outweigh the disadvantages; and, also, so long as I am not convinced that they would not attack your health, your life, even your love at Pont . . . Our friends do not all think with us on this matter, because they neither know the whereabouts nor the nature of our enemies. What is more, no one has replied yet to the simple question, which puts an end to all discussion: 'Has M. de M . . . asked

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

for you back again?' As long as he has not done so, it would be madness to go to him; when he does, we will think about it. As for the proceeding, I am, by reason of my honesty and my love, so far above suspicion of any personal interest, that I am going to speak to you quite openly. A detachment of English, landed on the shores of the continent of America, were massacred by the Caribees, excepting one young man who, after long pursuit, managed to conceal himself in a wood where a young Indian woman nursed him, gave him food and conducted him secretly to the sea-coast. A boat was waiting; his protectress wished to accompany him. No sooner had they reached Barbadoes than the monster sold the woman who had saved his life and given her heart into his keeping. Yariko, who loved the vile Yakel, cried out: 'I, who am with child! . . . I! . . .' Ah! this sublime cry is nature's cry. That 'I' implies at once the bitterest of reproaches, and the most pathetic disclosure a woman can make to her lover. I have read a rendering into verse of the tale in which Gellert has recounted this anecdote; in which, to improve upon the original, a long discourse on virtue is added; the author advises you, in long academic phrases, to commit a crime, while your heart cries out . . . 'I, the mother of his daughter, I sacrifice him! . . .' May your mouth utter no other words than these, and woe to those who fail to understand you!

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

XLV

November 19th, 1779.

Nothing could be tenderer than your letter, your hopes, even your illusions. Dear mistress, every sentiment that your soul begets is redolent of virtue, love and gentleness; and I have still to conceive how, with so vivid an imagination and so affectionate a heart, if I may say so, you yet have such force, such energy, such tenacity of purpose. Ah! long ago I came to the conclusion that your soul proceeded from the hands of nature in a magnificent moment. I should be sorry to destroy your hopes, which I share with you; but I must gain a clearer insight into the conduct of D. P . . . before I trust what he says; he seems to me too much in league with Bignon for the moment, although he says nothing about it.

You did well to help your friend in her extremity. In cases such as hers deference puts a restraint on none but the mean in heart. To think they should have chosen the first days of an apoplectic attack as a suitable time in which to endeavour to discover proofs of imbecility in a woman of sixty-six! Of such are the fiendish souls of the pious! The field of my arms is of azure, the bar of gold; the *demi-fleur de lis* (not *fleur de lis*, observe) is of silver, as well as the urn; the motto, *juvat pietas*; the supports I have already described to you. Try and have it arranged picturesquely. I have

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

no eyes, or I would send you a rough sketch. People of quality all adopt a duke's crown, because every pettyfogging attorney can sport that of count or marquis. The knight's cross you see on my father's seal is the badge of the great commander of Vasa.

I have alarmed you unnecessarily over your daughter. I have heard since that the bad good angel knew of her illness at once, sent Charles there, and would have sent his own doctor had the child taken a serious turn for the worse. But all the same, she ought to be weaned after the inoculation; and yet the months run on, and who knows what they may bring forth?

Never doubt, my own love, that on all occasions when my advice would be helpful to you, I shall give it you with the zeal of a lover, the ingenuousness of a kind brother; but it is useless for me to burden myself with repeating things you know just as well as I do, and on which there are no two opinions. The good angel's tolerance is great, because he is our friend; but I should be sorry to forget that he is in a position that can hardly be to his liking. That is the reason why I so often forbear to trust overmuch to facts, or persons about whom the same could be said: you, my sweet Sophie, you who deign to call me your guide, whom I regard as my witness and my judge, must never doubt the sincerity of my least act, my slightest word. You know that I can keep silent, but not that I can disguise my feelings. What is more, I have taken an oath always to think the

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

highest with reference to you. Ah! how sweet is our intercourse; how happy we, who have but one single soul! We feel, we shall feel the same, and in that lies my happiness, the glory of my life. Farewell, my all-loving Sophie, who boast that you know not how to please, and who, by an irresistible charm, subjugate, without even thinking about it, in spite of yourself, all with whom you come into contact. Farewell, best beloved. I have already seen you give fresh senses to old age, sensibility to indifference, activity to sloth: but what I shall never see is someone who loves you as your love loves you. GABRIEL.

I send you a few loose sheets, and also a tale in the style of Ferrante Pallavicino, who has wrapped up a handful of charming ideas in a prodigious mass of witty conceits, platitudes and coarseness. Let me know what you think of mine.

In the name of love, take care of your health and that accursed cold. I commend your chest and your nerves especially to your care. Take plenty of drops of Hoffmann, and plenty of milk.

Send me back the tale when you have made a copy of it.

XLVI

December 1st, 1779.

I don't know what polite speeches you can have made to D. P. to make him think you are so pleased with him. And yet you are by nature no

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

more of a flatterer than I, and we both think that flattery, which is an outrage on truth, is contemptible and cowardly treachery. But D. P. is so well satisfied with himself that he has no difficulty in imagining that other people are, too. We ought really, I suppose, to find a happy medium between flattery and misanthropy, just as between too great confidence in and too great distrust of oneself; but excessive complacency, especially as it is so likely to appear interested, is no less mean-spirited than excessive *amour-propre* is ridiculous; and if D. P. imagines that because I have, or rather seem to have, need of him I will pass over everything, he is mistaken. I should be more indulgent, and certainly less susceptible, if my independence were assured. But I shall never, any more than you will, aspire to that character of being all things to all people. How can one make a boast of knowing how to mould oneself according to the demands of personal interest, or how to change one's principles on the threshold of every house one enters? Grave with those who are grave, gay with those who are gay, but never unhappy with those who have fallen on evil days, these so-called amiable men are really only kind to suit their own purposes; and La Fontaine has written no line more strikingly true than this one: '*Tout flatteur vit aux dépens de celui qui l'écoute.*' Yet the world is full of people who are taken in by such men, because there is no mental malady more agreeable or more widespread than the love of flattery; and in these slave states, where the spirit has been dragged down to servi-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

tude, man is soon reduced to that meanness that puts, even in the simplest things, the untrue in place of the true. Society is no more than commerce in deceit, wherein is propagated praise without feeling, praise that is even given against the conscience. To know how to live in such a land is to know how to flatter, to know how to feign, disguise, counterfeit the affections; and fathers and mothers, tutors and guardians, and friends advise this unworthy traffic as the foundation of all success! . . . O my love! when shall we two be together again! . . . It would be a fine task to gather in all the evil done to nations by flattery, and collect all the services which favourites have rendered their masters! And the fools are always the dupes of flattery. One of the most magnificent sentences, perhaps the most magnificent, that Thomas ever wrote is that which ends his wonderful eulogy on Marcus Aurelius. 'But you who will succeed this great man, O son of Marcus Aurelius! . . . think on the burden the gods have placed upon your shoulders; think on the duties of those who are called upon to take the command, on the rights of those who obey. Destined as you are to reign, you must either be the most just or the most guilty of men. . . . You will, in the fulness of time, be told you are all-powerful: but you will be deceived; the limits of your power are with the law. They will tell you you are great, adored of your people. Listen: When Nero poisoned his own brother, they told him he had saved Rome from destruction; when he had his wife's throat

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

cut, they praised his justness to his face; when he assassinated his mother, they kissed the hand of the matricide, and ran to the temples to offer up thanks to the gods. Do not let yourself be dazzled by the deference of your people. If you have no virtues, still will they render you homage, even though they hate you. Believe me, one cannot abuse the people; outraged sense of justice wakes in every heart. Master of the world, you may order me to die, but you cannot bid me respect you. . . . ' God! what a fine passage! 'Listen: When Nero poisoned his own brother, etc.' But where are the kings to read it?

I thank you very kindly for the trouble you have taken to explain my wishes to the engraver. Hurry him on a little. Yes, dear love, mutual confidence is the sole guarantee of constancy; I know nothing so painful as mistrust of those we love. Dear Sophie! it is in this, as in everything, that you have left your lover nothing to desire; his life is bound to him not a whit more closely than his love for you. But preserve yourself for this love; so long as your chest is not comfortable, I can never be. Do not go killing yourself by writing me long letters; M. B . . . , who is all solicitude, all kindness, hit upon the plan of letting us have our letters quicker so long as they remain shorter; it makes me some amends; do not, therefore, do more than consult the situation at the moment of writing as to the ending or going on with a letter. Do not kill yourself either by send-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

ing my letters all back at once, especially if they are rather long; copying is more wearying than composing, and we ought only to give ourselves up to the occupation a little at a time.

I entreat you, my dearest love, quiet your inflammatory imagination . . . it is not worth being angry about, and a person as sensible as you does not get angry without doing herself harm. Render to your mother an ungarbled account of all that has occurred, and wait and see if she comes. Tone down your expressions a little; conceal the rigidity of your resolutions beneath the roses of eloquence. It matters little that the expression of one's will is given in sweet and docile form, so long as the will itself does not falter. I have seen heads as vacillating as weather-vanes employing words of iron. You are the very opposite of such, my Sophie! no one so sweet and yet so firm as you. I know that one's patience gives out at last, but that is not the time to take the pen. You ought to do as the Cardinal de Retz did. He was here once: did the officer who guarded him see that he wanted to work, he compelled him to walk. '*Mon Dieu! que vous me faites plaisir!*' replied his wily Eminence: '*l'étude me brûle le sang.*' 'Indeed!' replied the other: then the walking was not right. '*Ah! vous avez raison,*' replied the cardinal; '*le temps est affreux.*' Thus did he scoff at those who hoped he might die of grief; but they got nothing out of him, in spite of his urbanity. This reminds me of one of the vilest insults my father ever

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

hurled at me in my youth, '*c'est que j'étais ou serais un cardinal de Retz.*' I think now that he did me too great honour; for the cardinal was a great man, and at heart honest.

XLVII

February 24th, 1780.

I received your letter of the 31st, my dear one, at a moment when I thought the dungeon of Vincennes was the only thing surviving in the world, and that all the earth and the inhabitants thereof were swallowed up in it. Since your last letter I have received no news, and it is only to-day that the good angel, with his usual friendliness, has sent me the packet from you, together with a letter from D. P. and one from my uncle. Dupont, who had given me no sign that he was even alive since the 11th of January, writes me a letter, dated the 7th, in which he says that since he last wrote he has been very wretched; that he has spent three weeks at the bedside of his greatest friend (M. Turgot); that he has held him in his arms between life and death during three attacks, lasting two to three hours, one lasting as many as seven hours; and that, weighed down with grief and worn out with fatigue, and at the same time up to his ears in work, he used the little time he had at his disposal to do what was most urgent.

How is it you do not know la Tagnerette? She has often been to Dijon, and her mother Madame

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

Dubut, too. The mother is a strange woman, and pious into the bargain. I should never be surprised to hear that she was an intimate friend of your mother; she is a friend of Hocquart, her brother's father-in-law. Her brother is the young man who, in very peculiar circumstances, was a great favourite with Louis XV., a young man full of spirit, who seemed to be not without depth of character and a fair notion of honour. He has talent and, in spite of a wild youth, which was very wild indeed, one could see that he might become a man of mark. He was brought up most rigorously by his parents. If I went to take him to the Opera he would say he would come, adding: '*Mais me répons-tu que madame ma douce, ma chère mère ne me battra pas ?*'

I think, my love, we may count on the Vald . . . agreeing to an arbitration; it would greatly benefit you, because arbitrators judge from behaviour and conduct, while judges only judge facts, facts in respect of the law. I have an idea about this which I want to leave to ripen, and to discuss with the good angel before putting it to you; it may change the aspect of your affairs completely, and perhaps even of mine. It would deprive your daughter of a certain status, an odious status, and one which in all justice does not belong to her; but it would irrevocably assure you of your independence and of peace. I will speak to you about it in detail in my next letter.

You are wrong to think they have refused you the advice of Chabans; that is neither a natural nor a

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

just supposition, and it is far more simple to think the delay due to Chabans himself and his affairs; for the rest, I do not think much of him as an adviser; he has always seemed to me more an attorney than anything else. Perhaps time will furnish us with fresh resources. I am always longing to change your campaign.

I do not know if I shall be accused of extravagance, but I do know that it has cost me 137 francs 10 sous, and that I find it hard to forgive myself for spending so much. But what was I to do? I was naked, and I have, without exaggeration, worn all winter, as the good angel has seen with his own eyes, torn breeches. I half expect that a little pecuniary help may come to us. The good angel has almost effected the sale of my *contes*, and to such good purpose that I have even had to knock down his price. The '*Baisers de Jean Second*' is also going to be printed. My good kind friend has got me the task of making a translation of Boccaccio, which will bring me in a little money, too, and I mean to sell my Tibullus for a good price. Apropos of this, my darling, I send you the subjects of the little engravings I have composed for the heads of the chapters of this work. I hope you will be satisfied with them. I also send you the first three elegies, corrected and revised; I will send the rest in order from now. The paper of your manuscript is thick enough to stand erasure; and by rubbing it with sandarach you will give it the consistency necessary for making corrections; if you would prefer to send me your book, I would have

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

it corrected by my copyist, and I would try to insert my additions and corrections at the same time: I leave it to you to decide.

XLVIII

March 27th, 1780.

I received the sacrament this Easter in very agreeable fashion, my dear good Sophie, for the good angel sent me your letter for repentance of all my sins. For such a reward, I would sin again; the repentance suits my taste to a nicety.

What you tell me of the marriage of Rousseau's widow disgusts me as much as it does you, and I cannot conceive how so vile a creature could have inspired so great a man with the desire to associate himself with her for life. Alas! your compatriot Crébillon was not wrong in the answer he made to those asking him why he was always surrounded with dogs: '*C'est depuis que je connais les hommes.*' I assure you, dear one, it is wrong to have a lower opinion of your sex than of mine. It is one of the manias of all time of which I have never approved. Poets, orators, historians, ancient and modern, all seem to me to conspire to make woman the object of their satire. Homer makes Agamemnon say that nothing is more wicked or more shameless than woman. True, Agamemnon had just reason to complain of his wife. Not only was she unfaithful to him during the Trojan War, but she had him assassinated when he came home—*et ceci est trop fort!*

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

But it is not Homer alone who indulges in bitter invective against women ; they have always been treated with an impoliteness which is truly cynical. A founder of a certain sect, one Severus, has carried the absurdity so far as to say that woman was the work of the evil one. Ah ! my love, it is we who make women what they are ; and that is why they are of so little worth. The fair sex is, moreover, our benefactor, softening and sweetening our arid hearts. It is certain that, fickle though they are, they have far more sensibility than we ; and, to revert to the scandalous example quoted by you, if Rousseau's fellow-citizens had not been so insensate as to leave him to die of hunger, would his widow have lowered herself to commit so mean an act ? I have heard two things about Rousseau, which greatly increase my respect for him. He kept any copies of music that were brought to him with all the care in the world, and used them to comfort honest folks whose needs he knew to be great. It is a secret that has only come out after his death. In his last retreat, he gave shelter to an old woman of the village, and after his death they found the poor peasant by the side of his tomb, overwhelmed with grief at the death of her kind benefactor. They asked her what she did. ' Alas ! ' said she, ' I weep and pray. '—' But M. Rousseau was no Catholic. '—' He was good to me : I weep and pray. '—The good woman was only with great difficulty induced to leave the graveside. Her simple loving soul had learnt what true religion was ! Such, then, was the so-called egoist, the hard-hearted, pitiless misan-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

thrope, whom his cowardly enemies inveighed against more after his death than during his lifetime! Too limited, too weak, or too corrupt to raise themselves by the practice of virtue such as his, or even by speculation on the heights to which that virtue could attain, they strive to tarnish him, sully him with their vice-stained hands!

No, my dear lady, no, I am not going to ride my high horse on this occasion, because my horse, who is a mare, is ready for bed, and I have too much respect for her state and for her innocent foal to torment her further.

Why, yes, I think it very possible that I may succeed in making you devout, and that you may, without repugnance, embrace my order, not, as a matter of fact, a severe one. . . . O my love! how long since you uttered your vows upon my heart! We are bound, one to the other, by every possible tie; but the chains of religion usually only serve to loosen all the others. Let us not be saints, but lovers, always. Ah! how whole-heartedly do I every day renew my oath to be your lover for ever and for ever!

GABRIEL.

I have begged the good angel to send you three louis if he has them. Let me know if you have received the first two elegies of the second book.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

XLIX

May 8th, 1780.

My love, the wrong with which you reproach our nation and of which she has been guilty towards well-nigh all of her great men, belongs to our want of character, of energy. We should treat the light-hearted French as we treat a delicate stomach, to which we only give a little food at a time, and not grant them too many quick successes, nor too many claims to admiration, because they know how to become infatuated, but how to admire they do not know. They do not see with their own eyes, they are incapable of thinking for themselves; they have no character, no originality, and, in consequence, no genius; for the hall-mark of genius is originality, originality tempered with reason and discrimination. I am not speaking of individuals; no one can say we have not had great men; we have had very great men, and still have; but it is the age and not the soil that has produced them. I say the soil, and in that expression I include the government. We only offer to our artists and, for the most part, our men of letters, as a reward for their vigils, the mere plaudits of fashion or habit, the passing fruits of idle caprice. Those within whom no great talent chafes and burns remain mediocre to the end of their days; the great must always be unhappy. As for the women, few men know them better than I, and I know how much ill there is to be said of them; but of this ill it is we who

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

are responsible; and, after thinking long on the matter, I can almost say, with the Cardinal de Bernis :

D'un sexe digne qu'on l'adore,

N'exagérons pas les travers ;

Sans lui, l'homme serait encore

Farouche au milieu des déserts :

Oui, les femmes qu'on déshonore,

Même en voulant porter leurs fers,

Sont les fleurs qu'amour fit éclore

Dans le jardin de l'univers.

For the rest you have no one to blame but yourself if I am incapable of judging your sex severely.

Dear Sophie, you have reduced my philosophy and my profession of faith to the single phrase: 'All is but error, save the sentiments which you call up in me'; it is that which consoles me as I sit in irons, it is that which will constitute my happiness when reclining on the breast of fair liberty, it is that which I have sworn upon an altar, where, as you say so truly, *no false oaths are made*. Farewell; I adore you, O my best beloved! Send me all your news, quickly; I mean news of your health, detailed news.

L

May 28th, 1780.

My dear, the moment has come for me to test the power and extent of your love. It is true I have already received proofs without number, and

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

very dear they are; and yet you have never before been submitted to a test so delicate. You know, O my mistress! that the love of Gabriel is without bounds, and it has all the characteristics of ardour and fidelity that go to make up his being. Convinced though I am that my heart exacts only the tribute it is itself ready to pay, I yet should think myself but little loved if I were not loved by you wholly and solely, if any other object in nature whatsoever were capable of attracting you away from your passion, or rendering more difficult the sacrifices you have made in love's name. . . . But, my Gabriel, can you doubt that a sacrifice, no matter of what nature, so long as it is made for you, can be anything but a pleasure? . . . Such an answer does my loving Sophie whisper to herself on reading this. . . . No, my bride, no, happiness of my life! Idol of my heart, I do not question your courage, I know it costs you none of your love; and this idea has upheld my courage in this moment when I have to ask of you what I have hardly the strength to put before you.

Dear love! let us leave circumlocution to the pusillanimous. . . . Our little child is no more! Ah! you have me still: you loved me in her; render to me all the love you bore her, and let what hitherto was a divided affection now be concentrated on a single object, as of old. . . . O my all! O my blessing! I can picture your grief; you know whether I share it with you or not. . . . Alas! Alas! that I may not mingle my tears with yours! . . . Love cannot impose silence on nature,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

but it can and ought to console her; it can and ought to prevent baneful melancholy from injuring her dearest interests, which are health and life. Make me then a sacrifice, not indeed of your grief but of your grief's excesses. Shed your tears; pour them out on my heart; pour forth your lamentations; but do not embitter them still further, for they are bitter enough already, by an obstinacy that tears you from your duty, throws your lover into despair, and makes him look with horror upon the life to which it should be your part to reconcile him. You alone in all the world can do it, O my angel! A hideous thick veil hides happiness from my eyes; you alone, who have so often lifted it, can lift it once for all. You see what is my fate! You see what trials I am destined to undergo! Would you desire that my only consolation, the conviction that I am very fondly loved, should be taken from me? Yes, indeed. I should think myself but very feebly loved if the death of a child, whom, alas! we did not think to survive, but whom we knew to be born to the lot of all mortals, rendered you deaf to my voice, my consolations, my caresses. . . . I know what happiness you promised yourself in the future from our little child, and what a pleasure it was for you to make plans for her happiness. . . . But will you dare to say or to believe that there is no more happiness in the world for you, when you can do all for my happiness; while I exist, while I live for you, when I have even reached, who knows, the moment when I shall be restored to your arms?

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

. . . O my dear! we have suffered enough ourselves in our lives not to look upon death as nature's best gift. How many ills may your daughter not have been spared! It is then for ourselves we ought to weep; and the tears love draws forth for his own sake should not prolong grief, when a sentiment even more noble bids them cease to flow.

Alas! my Sophie, I quoted to you some months ago the touching words of some ancient sage: 'The death of a child must always be premature, if the mother is alive to witness it.' The remark is pathetically true. But how many mothers have cause to grieve over the children who live! And tell me, could you pause on the confines of existence, and read in the book of fate, would you wish to live? No, not without the compensation of our love. Well then, that love remains to you; that love consoles me for a life packed with fears, perils and pains. Consoles, did I say? It makes me forget them all, bringing me back to you, you of whom I am not worthy and for whom I have not yet paid half dearly enough . . . Sophie, my dear Sophie! I conjure you, and I pray that you will not refuse the tenderest of lovers his request, set a limit on your grief, and ever bring to the grief you are bound to feel a moderation that may calm my anxieties concerning the effect so baneful an event is likely to have upon your health.

You will pity me, I have no doubt, for having to be the sender of such cruel news. Alas! Could I have told you it as I pressed you in my arms, our

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

hearts, united, would have gathered strength to bear it; but absence embitters everything. I hesitated whether to tell you of our loss at once; but fears lest you should hear of it from another source, less tenderly, my trust in your courage, the high opinion I hold of your love, which I never doubt but my own will supplement, so that it may bear this terrible privation with strength and fortitude, decided me to speak to you about it. Ah! Sophie! your lover is no less unhappy than you when thinking of your griefs.

I should be inconsolable were you but an ordinary lover. Alas! I should have to confess that one of our bonds, the most sacred of them all, is broken. But in your case to think thus would be an insult. Love and honour unite us independently of all other motives, all other objects; and it is not in the power of human beings, nor of nature, to relax our chains while there is life in our bodies. If we are destined to press other pledges of our love fondly in our arms, maybe we shall cast upon them glances more serene. A certain number of children have to pay tribute to death; the reaper has taken the first fruit of our love; we may hope he will spare the others. . . . O my love! we have felt miseries even greater than this! It was ourselves, a separate part of ourselves, that misfortune attacked when it willed fate to part us. Love, hope, and our kind friends have healed up that deep wound; this new sore should heal more easily.

Ah! my generous-hearted Sophie, do not crush me with a new torment, the thought of your suffer-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

ing and your danger; let us not punish ourselves for our misfortune; do not add to the ills you have. Weep, my child, weep; but not in wild excess; let your grief be gentle and tender, even as you are yourself. You have not enjoyed the sweetness of seeing your daughter for long, nor the tenderness of her embraces, the embraces of her babyhood. . . . Alas! what need to grieve for that? If I envy you the pleasure of having embraced her, it is because I want as many motives for grief as my dear mistress has.

If tears could melt the heart of fate, I would say to you: Dear love, let us weep together, let us weep tears of blood; let all our days be spent in mourning, all our nights in sorrow and sleeplessness; our grief is of use to those we love. But groans do not bring back the dead; we ought not, therefore, for their sake to be overcome by such violent sorrow as might prove hurtful to those who still survive. Do not nurse your bitter grief, natural though it be; and I hope, I trust, I demand, covering you with my kisses and my tears the while, that it may be your love for me that you feel and wish to feel most keenly. . . . Oh, how hard and unfeeling are those parents who, instead of hastening to enjoy the possession of their children, and gather them to their breasts in mutual tenderness and love, instead of profiting by the present, which hardly belongs to them, repress and oppress them, reserving themselves for a future which they will never see, for reparations which fortune will never grant! . . . The children of such parents live to suffer,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

while those of kind and tender mothers are mown down in their cradles! . . .

It is not the time to talk to you of business, my own! Interests so paltry, so lukewarm by the side of great afflictions of the soul touch me no more than they do you. I ought, however, to relieve you of one of your troubles, which appears to have agitated you deeply at the moment of writing your last letter. My dear, M. B . . ., who feels our loss very keenly, wrote to me before he knew of it: 'Do not take too much notice of the precautions demanded of you with reference to your correspondence. Open your hearts one to the other, but let your replies be such as your prudence may dictate; dwell upon those points, so delicate and so important, that bear directly on your trial. I am only telling you what you know as well as I; I have noticed that you have already followed my advice to a certain extent.' These words, so full of wisdom and of friendship, ought to relieve you of all suspicion that you are likely to be deprived of the assistance my counsel may afford you. . . . I implore you not to write in these earliest moments of your grief to your mother. She is incapable of sharing your sorrow; you can hardly realise that fully enough: but, my best beloved, even sorrow should preserve a decent front, and we must be careful not to aggravate ills already consuming enough.

O my love! It is not like you to let regret for what you have lost render you unjust towards what is left you. Think of your lover, think, too, how

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

much fate has spared you, in spite of all its maltreatment, and you will be bound to confess that more than consolation is still left. It is this, my all! that enables me to support my sorrow, and gives me strength to write to you so few hours after receiving news that pierced me to the heart and even made me tremble for my life; for you have made me love my life. I have wept copiously, and it has relieved me; but my soul will know no rest until I have your promise that you mean to sacrifice all to love, and seek in your own bosom for a remedy for all your ills. Write soon, my Sophie-Gabriel; I will reply instantly, and M. B . . . is prepared to let you have my letter. Alas! you always get mine soon enough; but I never get yours.

Farewell, my well-belovéd: show me that you have the courage that I expect of your great heart. Rise above the gloom and sorrow into which you have been plunged, and think only of the eternal, inviolable love my heart has sworn, my tender kisses repeated, and upon which no one in the world can make any effect. GABRIEL.

Our daughter succumbed to convulsions while cutting her teeth. The nurse, they say, is inconsolable. I have begged M. B . . . to give her what little I can afford. Those who loved our child have a claim upon us. . . . Alas! you will see only too clearly that it is with hand hard pressed to my own wound that I endeavour to heal yours.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

LI

June 7th, 1780.

I have received, my dear child, your letter of the 2nd of June, which has quieted my anxiety a little, and brought balm to my fevered spirit. I knew your noble courage, and was not wrong in trusting that it would not be at fault as long as love still upheld you. Never have I loved you so well, or felt so grateful to you, for taking so much upon yourself at this time of sorrow, and sparing me so many sharp and bitter pains. Alas! paternal love is indeed a natural instinct, common to the brutes as well, with this difference, that with them it is purely a physical feeling, with us it may be strengthened, just as it may be weakened, by thought. But if there is not a duty more natural than that of cherishing one's children, there are more sacred duties, and such are those we feel towards each other. Thought ought therefore in this case to allay our grief, not aggravate it; for it is certain that our tears, useless to her who is no more, would be harmful to us who are left. . . . Ah! at any rate nature can have no reproach to make to us. It is not we, but our tyrants, who have spurned and rejected nature's gifts, who have dried up the source of the life that nature had vouchsafed to us, who have handed over that life into hired and mercenary hands. Alas! nature was kinder than they; some say she is weeping bitterly for our daughter . . . poor little one, she

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

was destined to perish, and has fulfilled her destiny, from which there is no escape for any of us.

I agree with you when you say that it is the fruits of so tender a love that ought to grow and ripen. We may be sorry for the child who has perhaps never excited any tender feelings in his father; I confess that I pity nothing save the vanity of such a man. I am very much inclined to think that his children flattered his despotism only, that he saw in them only subjects to be mastered, and that his family was to him only a kingdom wherein he wished to reign absolute monarch; but we who had no thoughts save for the happiness of our little child, and who made her happiness one with our own. . . . Ah! we have a right to weep.

LII

June 19th, 1780.

I am going to make you a present, you who have no frivolous tastes, of a sketch, in manuscript, of the proposed legislation for Poland by J.-J., which D. P. has given me. The Poles came to this great man, who in his old age had retired from all intercourse with mankind, and even from intercourse with his genius, to ask of him, in his solitude, to draw up a code of laws for them. He breathed new life and soul into his genius in his attempt to respond worthily to their demands. The work is, I think, as fine as any of the author's productions. But how foreign was his character to our

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

morals, our ideas! One might think the philosopher had just come from an interview with Numa in the forests of the Sabines, or with Lycurgus on the Mountain. The first advice he gives the Poles is to cut off communication with the rest of Europe almost entirely. But for this purpose he will have none of those ramparts such as proved so useful in separating China from Tartary; he would have the barrier formed by the character of the nation. How, then, to form this national character? *By children's games*, replies the great man; by public ceremonies, moving and majestic, by *fêtes* and holidays. Two ancient legislators have in similar fashion impressed the image of their character upon the men who were recipients of their laws, Lycurgus and Numa: even to-day there are men who bear these sacred images in their own characters, their own souls. There are to this day Spartans living free on the mountains of Laconia, who mock at the sovereignty of the Grand Turk; and there is a people, under the dominion of the Pope himself, who constantly display characteristics reminiscent of those of Roman People of the Republic. Imitate these legislators and their institutions, said Rousseau to the Poles. Organise national spectacles and *fêtes* which may fill you with a disgust for the happiness and pleasure-making of other nations; let it be impossible for you to be anything else but Poles, and you will be Poles for all eternity. Neighbours, more powerful than yourselves, may conquer you, they cannot break your spirit; the Russians may *swallow* you,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

but *digest* you they never will be able to. In isolating them thus from all the world, this new Lycurgus would seem, in effect, to be preparing for the Poles a happiness which he never found among men himself: morality, with hardly any laws. The reason for the first code of magistrates: citizens who should all be legislators, so that none among them might be slaves; labourers rendering themselves worthy to be, in time of need, defenders of their country, by exercises and military festivals, remitting their rustic labours the while; rewards all paid in honour, not in money; money proscribed altogether, almost, as causing the spread of vice and crime with even greater rapidity than riches; all ranks alike accessible to all citizens, who would fill them successively, increasing in virtues and talents as in greatness, the throne ever filled by citizens who would have learnt in all the states through which they had passed, the needs and duties of all the states; and, finally, happiness always in moderation, because extreme happiness wears itself out, and man soon finds weariness and disgust in immoderate pleasures . . . such is the picture of the government that the citizen of Geneva would have given to Poland. He foresaw that he would be told that there was no great merit in reviving the politics of Plato; that men would endeavour to put him off by ridicule, because ridicule is the sole resource of the feeble, ridicule of all that bears the stamp of greatness and of strength; that they would confront him with the taste of all modern nations for the delights of luxury, and the conse-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

quent corruption of their morals, to convince him of the necessity for leaving them their luxuries and their corruption; it is in combating these objections that he displays that overwhelming eloquence which so often triumphs over our disgust or our horror at the morals of the ancients; or that he gives evidence of that flexibility of mind which discovers a means of turning even our vices to account, and thus bringing us by degrees to the virtues we dared not look in the face before. He does not wish to bring about the change by word alone, as God does; he takes as his instruments man, time and wise precaution. He presents a complete sketch, but he knows well enough that it can only be executed in portions, gradually. He does not say: Give me angels, and I will make them live the lives of good men: give me a country wherein there are no institutions and I will there establish perfect institutions; he says: Give me Poland and the Poles, such as they are to-day, and I do not think it impossible to give them legislation and the happiness of which I now offer them the vision. The passions of mankind are always put forward as an insurmountable obstacle to all reform; we do not see that for him who knows how to manage them they are most sure and effective instruments; such a man may even in the end come to destroy them all; and, if there ever has been a real Stoic, his stoicism has only been attained through his passions.

I thought to please you, my beloved, by giving you some idea, however feeble, of this fine work.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

My dear love, I am asking M. B. to send you forthwith what money I have, exclusive of what is wanted to pay the turnkeys. I can see how you must be put about; but I hope you will feel a little easier, financially, now that your daughter is no more. Alas! it is ease dearly bought; but that is the way of the world; we have to pay heavily for the least of our blessings as for the greatest, to pay for them far beyond their real value.

I was told the other day of a touching example of the power of affection. The Countess d'Harcourt lost her husband in 1769. The loving wife gave herself up to her grief completely and devoted herself to thinking out all possible means of expiating it. She constructed at Notre-Dame, in memory of her husband, a very handsome mausoleum, where she is herself represented in most sorrowful aspect. Not content with this mournful tribute to her grief, she had a wax figure made of the count, in life size; she clothed it in the dress he had last used, and placed it on a sofa by the side of the bed in which she was accustomed to sleep. Several times a day she went and shut herself up in this sad spot to commune with the mute image concerning the constancy of her love and the poignancy of her grief.

O my love! there are some things that we shall never experience, not for a long time, at any rate! . . . But we must live to love, and to pay the delicious price of our great love.

GABRIEL.

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

I enclose the epitaph of your lovesick Dorat.

De nos papillons enchanteurs

Emule trop fidelle,

Il caresse toutes les fleurs,

Excepté l'immortelle.

LIII

July 12th, 1780.

There is a tale of more recent date than that of the Countess d'Harcourt, and far more tragic. I do not know all the details, but it appears that a young lady of fortune, being with child, arranged to fly in company with her lover. On the very day fixed upon, the maiden's uncle called the young fool out in a duel. He had not strength enough to refuse, even on such a day, and he added to his weakness of accepting the rendezvous the still greater weakness of telling his mistress all about it. But they held to their plan, and the hour was fixed for half-past eleven at night, on the Pont-Royal, whither the damsel was to betake herself in the disguise of a peasant and the man to drive in a coach. He had the madness to tell the unfortunate maiden that if, at the stroke of eleven, he had not arrived, it would mean that he would be dead; she had by this time come to believe anything he said, and, arriving at the place of meeting at eleven, waited for half-an-hour in the most agonising suspense, and then proceeded to hurl herself over the parapet as the half-

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

hour struck; the young lunatic arrived the moment after . . . and—did not follow his mistress!

My love, it is I who have given you your enthusiasm for Rousseau, and I do not regret it. It is not for his great talents that I envy this extraordinary man, but for his virtue, the source of all his eloquence and the very essence of his work. I knew him and have since known several people who have practised virtue as he did. He was always the same, a man full of uprightness, candour and simplicity, without suspicion of ostentation or deceit, or the art of concealing his faults or making vain display of his virtues; we may pardon his detractors, for they could not have known him. It was not given to all the world to appreciate the sublimity of this noble soul, and man can only be judged by his peers. Whatever men may think or say of him during the following century (it is the term that envy leaves to his detractors), there has perhaps never been a man so virtuous; he was virtuous in spite of the conviction that the world did not believe in the sincerity of his writings or his actions. He was virtuous in spite of nature, fate, mankind; in spite of reverses, calumny, grief and persecution; he was virtuous with the liveliest sensibility towards injustice and misery; he was virtuous, in fine, in spite of weaknesses which I ignore, but which he has, so they say, revealed in his confessions. He wrested far, far more from his passions than they could steal from him. Endowed with the virtuous and incorruptible soul of an Epicurean, he preserved, in his morals, the rigidity of a Stoic. Whatever abuse may

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

have been made of his confessions, they will always prove the good faith of a man who spoke as he thought, wrote as he spoke, lived as he wrote, and died as he had lived.

Farewell, my dear and only love! farewell, happiness and life of my soul; I shall not keep you waiting for good news, when I have any; you may trust me. I adore you, and I think this passion, so tested and tried, so justified, so legitimate, may well defy fate.

GABRIEL.

Make what reply you like to Dupont.

I am sending you my first volume of Boccaccio and the subjects of the little engravings; send them all back; I have only this copy and a very rough draft; my man is too busy to make you a copy.

LIV

August 1780.

And you too, my sweet Sophie, you too, it seems to me, should have a wish to scold the good angel; but do not gratify it, for all that he deserves it: for I have already scolded him as roundly as though I was full master of myself. Yet here I have your letter, together with one from Madame du S . . . , if possible more loving than your own. Joking apart, her letter is very kind, very affectionate, very much in earnest even, and that gives me all the more pleasure in that she must assuredly have been seen by my father. She will hasten, so she

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

says, to serve me the moment I give her the right to do so; in consequence she writes to my uncle, to her sister-in-law, etc. M. du S . . . makes the finest protestations in the world, and offers me his house as a *bien d'épreuve* and his *présence pour caution*; which seems to me a little foolish and a little gauche. I am too old to suffer mentors, and such mentors. But you see that you are quite wrong to take the present as a time for seeing everything in a gloomy light. All is going on very well on my behalf: and all will go well with you with a little patience. Dupont wants the Valdh . . . to settle an income of 4000 francs on you. *Basta costi*, if he succeeds; but I have my doubts. I shall always welcome any plan to establish your complete pecuniary independence, independence even of me; on this, and my promise with reference to your liberty as a widow, you may count on my never going back. You see that I hope you will not imitate the widows of Malabar, and that you will not be taken with a fancy to die on the same day as that on which M. de Mon . . . gives up the ghost. It strikes me, to judge from the reception of the *Veuve du Malabar* (a very bad new tragedy), that that kind of fanaticism will never gain a hold on the France of to-day. What folly to desire that marriage, an institution designed for the continuance of the race, should end in depopulating the world! and then, mind you, it seems to me that I would rather die naturally than be condemned to die; that means all the pain without any of the merit. Where, moreover,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

is the justice of having to be responsible to a woman for health one is likely to lose away from home? When the husband dies of his constancy, the wife would have to die of her faithfulness; surely that is not just. For my part, who find marriage rather a sad performance at any time, I confess that the prospect of a funeral pile does not add much to its gaiety. But after all, my love, we men lay too much stress on politeness, and you women too much on humanity, for this law ever to pass muster among us. Be not disturbed, therefore; after all we should pity the moribund; and, in truth, a husband is often so weary of his *ménage*, when called upon to depart for another world, that to propose to him to make his journey in company with his wife is not exactly to lessen the weariness of the voyage.

You bore me with your everlasting: *Do not hesitate to refuse, do not hesitate to refuse*; in your absence I accord myself the greatest of all pleasures, that of giving you all I can, that is to say hardly anything at all; but this 'hardly anything' is the limit of my capacity. My subscriptions go on their way, and from time to time I receive a fresh volume; of what are you complaining, I should like to know? I cannot draw large sums, so long as my works are not yet ready for the printer, and, as soon as I receive a few louis in advance, I shall have to buy some books for your use.

I send you to-day my third and fourth volume of Boccaccio, for which I am more than paid if you

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

approve, the engravings of the third (those of the fourth are not finished yet) and a little manuscript of Dupont: it is a report of the last salon of the Margrave then reigning at Baden. You will send it me back, please; I have asked him for the first two accounts made by him in a similar fashion, in order that you may have the collection of them complete.

LV

SEALED PACKET (*undated*)

Papers delivered into the hands of M. Boucher, who will know their destination and who is begged not to open them until after my death.

HONORE-GABRIEL-REQUETY,
Comte de Mirabeau, fils.

To my Sophie

The moment of everlasting separation has come, O my loving Sophie! Love's illusions have long abused our imagination; but Nature refuses to be cheated of her due. The slow poison of grief has consumed your love: he is about to die. . . . O thou wretched other part of myself! who will soften this terrible blow, crueller a hundred times than that to which in a few hours I shall succumb? for I lose you, and it is a bitter grief, but my life ends with it. This heart wherein you reign supreme will beat no more for pain, no more for love; and thou, thou wilt remain to weep for thy Gabriel. . . . Ah! Sophie,

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

how I pity thee ! I am far less unhappy than thou, since I am not destined to survive thee.

But do you think your duty to me is over ? no, Sophie, no : there is still the dear little child whom your love gave to me. She lives to soften your loss, to compensate you as far as that is possible. She has only you ; you alone are her mother, you alone her father : you owe her the love of both our hearts. Ah ! my Sophie, how many duties are left for you ! and what consolation will be yours in fulfilling them !

Dear Sophie ! O my best beloved ! My heart's elect ! Beware, beware of outraging love and nature by the crime of despair. Often, in the passionate delirium of your love, you have sworn not to survive me. . . . But were you a mother then, O my love ? No, you were not ; and if you think yourself bound to-day by this rash and guilty oath, you will be both a cowardly lover and an unnatural mother.

Yes, my adored Sophie, I bequeath to my daughter all those of my rights that she can inherit : I leave her all your care, all your love ; and had I any fears as to the courage of my mistress and her compliance with my last earnest prayers, I should die in despair at having begotten a child for whom I can do nothing, and also, by one slip, immolated mother and daughter alike on the altar of my baneful love. O Sophie ! Sophie ! would you let a passion at once so tender, so pure, so faithful, be to me, on my deathbed, a source of cruel repentance and consuming remorse ? Live, O my love ! grant

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

me that proof of your affection: live to clasp my child in your arms, to speak to her of her father, to tell her how he loved her mother, how he loved her, how he would have loved her. . . . Ah! if, in the bosom of the earth whither I am going I might preserve that heavenly spark, that loving soul upon which you will concentrate all your own strength and energy, I might hope one day to unite on my breast my dear mistress and my child. . . . I do not know, my Sophie, I do not know, but I find it hard not to believe that as long as some particle of my being exists upon the earth, my love will live too. Whether it be an illusion or not, the soul of Gabriel and the soul of Sophie, with their incomparable tenderness, seem to me imperishable. The idea consoles us; it promises us a witness to judge our hearts, who will know whether we deserved the treatment we have received; who, more indulgent than man, will pardon our weaknesses, and purify those sentiments that do no harm to virtue. . . . If only, in our sojourn in the land of everlasting happiness, out of reach of fanatics and madmen, calumniators and tyrants, we might for ever come together again and love each other as of old! God! Almighty God! give me back my dear one; forgive me, for her virtue's sake. Ah! if I ever denied Thy all-seeing providence, it was lest I might be tempted to believe the accomplice of the wicked! Thou knowest whether I was sincere: Thy feeble creature cannot have offended Thee. Couldst Thou harden Thy heart against him, and punish him for the feebleness of his understanding? Cast

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

at least one glance of mercy upon her who was seduced from the paths of virtue by her lover: lighten her darkness, protect her erring footsteps; grant her strength to withstand my loss, to discover the truth, to unfold it to her little daughter, and to deserve in all things to be an object of Thy mercy. . . . Alas! my Sophie, this letter is long, considering the moment when you must read it. What more shall I add? . . . I mistrust my own emotions, and I end. . . . I end it for ever. Ah! never cease to think that he who will die pronouncing your name, who cherishes you with the most tender, the most faithful love, who never, for one moment of his life, even in thought, went back on the feelings he had sworn to bear towards you, exacts, in the name of your love, and, if I may say so, of your gratitude, that you live for your daughter, who is also mine.

GABRIEL.

I have conjured M. Boucher to obtain permission from M. Lenoir to remit to you all those of my papers I have judged worthy to be preserved, and those of my books which he, M. Boucher, has himself no use for. You will give your portrait, that portrait sprinkled o'er with my kisses and bathed in my tears, together with my rings, to my daughter. You will yourself wear the heart that you gave me; it has never left mine. You will have a medallion put on my box, containing your portrait and mine: you will prevail on M. Boucher to accept it. Never forget all we owe to our kind patron. It is a debt we have in common, and which

MIRABEAU'S LOVE-LETTERS

you alone can repay. Endeavour to rejoin my mother, my loving mother, and bestow on her the care I would myself have bestowed on her declining years. I have reminded her of what she was pleased to promise me for my daughter, and I have left no stone unturned to assure her of the help and protection she can, alas! no longer look for from me. Do not publish the work '*Sur les lettres de cachet et les prisons d'Etat*' ever, without M. Lenoir's permission. I have promised it to him, begging him only to remit to you this manuscript, copied by myself. My only motive in making this request of him was to procure you this consolation at least, that of having all that remains of me, in one form or another. So little of vanity has entered into this desire, that I have burnt my memoirs, which contained too passionate an apology for my conduct, and all that was not of a purely literary character, unless it be the Tibullus, of which you are so fond, translated and written out in my own hand. I have preserved a portion of the history of our love, as you desired me to; the work on the *lettres de cachet*, because I thought it might be useful; a few detached thoughts and fragments, whence you may glean ideas for my daughter; in short, all the fragments or rough sketches which I have sent you from time to time, because you will prefer to keep them in my writing rather than in your own. All the rest has been committed to the flames. You will pardon me this sacrifice; I had more reasons than one for making it.

INDEX

A

Adonis, 124
Africa, natives' idea of heaven,
45
Alexander the Great, 129
Alexandrine, 24, 25
'Aloisia,' the, 290
Amsterdam, 205
'Aristarchus,' 228
Armide, 299
Auvert, the painter, 283

B

B. (M.), 149, 207-209, 295, 324,
325, 331
Bacon, Lord, 186
Berard, 89
Bernard, 31
Bernis, Cardinal de, quotation
from, 318
Besançon, 231
Bignon, 304
Bon, Monsieur, 280
Bookplate design, 175
Boston as a safe retreat, 119
Boucher, Monsieur, 160, 274,
337, 340
Brémond, 26, 27
Briançon, de, 16
Buffon's '*Natural History*,' 183
Bussy, Monsieur de, quota-
tion of, 67

C

Cabris, Madame de, 27, 248
Caribees, English massacred
by, 303
Carrouge, Madame, 26, 27
Caunigham, family of, 150
Chabans, 312, 313
Changey, Madame de, 191
Changuion, 6
Choiseul family, 25
Clairval, 25
Condé, Prince de, 250
Coul, 10
Council, decrees of the, 270
Courbeville, 68
Courcelles, Madame de, 61,
62
Crébillon, quotation from, 314
Crévanna, 11

D

D. P. See Dupont
Damon and Pythias, devotion
of, 214, 215
Daumelet, Mademoiselle, 291
Deity, essence of the, 272-274
Desaleu, Madame, 75
Diot, Mademoiselle, 262, 267
Dorat, Monsieur, 261, 262
— epitaph of, 332
Draweman, 6
Dubut, Madame, 312

INDEX

Dupont, Monsieur, 261-263,
265, 266, 268-271, 274, 275, 279,
283, 286, 288, 304, 305, 311, 327,
334, 335
— *Report of the Salon of the*
Margrave of Baden, 337

E

Emilie, a pastel-painter, 284
English massacred by Carib-
bees, 303
Epictetus, 80
'*Esprit des Lois*,' 183
Essarts, the, 289

F

F. See Font, Monsieur
Feuillans, Madame de, 3
Fielding's '*Tom Jones*,' 191
Font, Madame, 240
Font, Monsieur, 70, 276-278,
282, 296, 299, 300
Fontellian, 19, 75
French, how to treat the, 317
Friend of Humanity, the, 15,
231

G

Gabriel-Sophie, Mademoiselle,
daughter of Mirabeau and
the Marquise de Monnier,
birth of, 105, 124
— motto of, 125
— description of, 144, 145, 251,
252, 277, 278
— illness of, 276
— death of, 319-325
Gabielli, a singer, 206, 207
Galileo, the punishment of,
285, 286
Gambarata, Galileo at, 286
Gellert, anecdote by, 303
Givori, 71

Grenoble and Angers, Bishop
of, 66
Grille, Marquis de, 291
Guérin, 26, 27

H

Harcourt, Countess d', 331, 332
Hebe, Madame de Cabris
compared with, 248
d'Helincourt, governor of the
Bastille, 88, 89
Hieron, 272
Hippocrates, 301
Hocquart, 312
Hoffmann, drops of, 182, 305
Holland a model country, 29
Holy Fathers, 270
Homer's Agamemnon, 314, 315
— description of the Cestus of
Venus, 223
d'Humières, 71

I

If, Château d', ancient priva-
teer at, 288

J

Jacobins' Church of Toulouse,
291
Jansenism, 289

L

L. (C. M. P.), a singer, 206
La Bruyère, quotation from,
53
La Fontaine, 186
— quotation from, 307

INDEX

Latour-du-Pin, 26, 27
 Launay, Madame de, 289
 Le Kain in *Tancrède* referred to, 153
 Lenclos, Ninon, 58
 Lenoir, Monsieur, 14, 15, 19, 89, 154, 159, 160, 164, 173, 209, 222, 224, 230, 253, 256, 258, 278, 280, 295, 340, 341
 Le Quesne, 11, 18
 Linguet's '*Diary*,' 14
 London, prisoners of, 129
 'Louis XII., *History of*,' 36, 37
 'Louis XIII., *History of*,' 88
 Louis XV., 312
 Lycurgus, 328, 329

M

M., M. de. See Monnier.
 Malabar, widows of, 335
 Mar, Monsieur de, 229
 Marcus Aurelius, eulogy on, 308
 Mari, Monsieur de, 264
 Maria Angela, a pretty name, 266
 Marie Thérèse, 34, 263
 Martin, M., 19
 Marv., Monsieur de, 251
 Mazarin, Cardinal, 65
 — Madame de, 61-64, 66-68
 — Monsieur de, 63-69
 Messalina, 29, 60
 Mirabeau, name of, 74
 — created into a marquise, 89
 — coat of arms of, 294, 304
 — anecdotes of, 291-293, 303, 305, 332
 — epitaph by, 172
 — mottoes of, 11, 125, 212
 — poem by, 159
 — quotations by, 149, 150, 159

Z

Mirabeau—*continued*
 — on God, 272-274
 — works of, referred to:—
 — '*Avis aux Hessois*,' 176
 — '*Baisers de Jean Second*,' 313
 — '*Boccaccio*,' 313, 334, 336
 — '*Heures de Sophie*,' 270
 — '*Homer*,' 141
 — '*Le Lecteur y mettra le titre*,' 176
 — '*Le pouvoir de l'harmonie*,' 263
 — '*Ovid's Metamorphoses*,' 176
 — '*Réponse à la lettre de la raison*,' 176
 — '*Sur les lettres de cachet et les prisons d'Etat*,' 341
 — '*Tibullus*,' 141, 205, 290, 313, 341
 Mirabeau, Madame de, 49, 199, 259, 261, 271
 Monbourg, Monsieur de, grand-vicar of Sens, 267
 Monnier family, 245, 254
 Monnier, Marquis de, 52, 64-68, 302, 335
 Monnier, Sophie, Marquise de, 48, 51
 — epigram of, 28
 — birth of daughter of, 105
 — portrait of, 230
 Montesquieu, 301
 Montesson, Madame de, 75
 Montpensier, Mademoiselle de, 88

N

N., M. L., 149, 199, 267
 Nérestan, 206
 Nero, 308, 309
 Nevers, Duc de, 67
 Newton, Sir Isaac, 186
 Numa, 328

INDEX

O

- Enomaüs and work entitled
'Impostors Found Out,' 219
 Orestes, quotation from, 209
 Orléans, Duc d', 75, 88
 Ornano, Maréchal d', 88, 89
 Orosmane, 206
 Ovid, *'Art of Love'* referred
 to, 159
 — *'Commentary on,'* 199
 — *'Metamorphoses,'* 176

P

- P., Monsieur, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14,
 16, 19, 31, 38, 48, 53, 70, 75, 84,
 98
 P., D. See Dupont, Mon-
 sieur
 Padua, Galileo at, 285, 286
 Paduan students, 287, 288
 Palais Mazarin, 63
 Pallavicino, Ferrante, 305
Pastor Fido, a play, 142
 Peterborough, Lord, quota-
 tion from, 93
Philemon et Baucis, fable of,
 213
 Plato's *'Politics,'* 329
 Plutarch on God, 272
 Poland, proposed legislation
 for, 327-330
 Pontarlier, 127, 246, 254, 297,
 302
 Psyche, Sophie compared
 with, 255
 Pythias and Damon, devotion
 of, 214, 215

R

- R., Madame de. See Ruffey,
 Madame de.

- R., Monsieur de. See Ruffey,
 Monsieur, de.
 R., Monsieur le Président de,
 13, 15, 16
 Racine, on God, 272
 Raynal's *'Histoire des Deux
 Indes,'* 183
 Renaud's speech to Armide,
 299
 Retz, Cardinal de, 310, 311
 Richelieu, Duc de, 66
 Rivière, imprisonment of, 289
 Rohan, Chevalier de, 67
 Rougemont, Monsieur de, 43,
 207, 295
 Rousseau, character of, 333
 — enthusiasm and respect for,
 315, 333
 — his genius, 182-184
 — on education, 233
 — works of :—
 — *'Emile,'* 183
 — *'Héloïse,'* 13, 182, 185, 290
 — *Sketch of proposed legisla-
 tion for Poland,* 327-330
 Rousseau's widow, marriage
 of, 314
 Roxelane, 144
 Ruffei, name of, 73
 Ruffey, Madame de, 73, 128,
 164, 224, 240, 251, 264, 271, 278
 Ruffey, Monsieur de, 75, 77, 78,
 82, 85, 89, 143, 164, 245, 246

S

- S., Madame du, 334
 S., Monsieur du, 335
 Sage, commission entrusted
 to, 67
 Saillant, Madame du, 248, 249
 Saint-Belin, Mademoiselle de,
 4, 6, 28

INDEX

Saint-M., 267, 283
 Saint-Réal, Abbé de, works
 of, 64
 Sainte-Pélagie, 123
 Sainte-Sophie, Madame, 251,
 252
 Sais, Temple of, inscription on
 the, 272
 Savoy, Duke of, 62
 Severus, on Women, 315
 Simonides, on the essence of
 the Deity, 272
 Smith, Richard, a bookbinder,
 94
 Sophie, Marquise de Monnier.
 See Monnier, Sophie, Mar-
 quise de
 Spartans of Laconia, 328
 Spinola, Thomassine, 36, 37
 Stahl, 301
 Sutton, Dr, 246
 Syracuse, the tyrant of, 214,
 215

T

Tagnerette, la, 311
Tancrède referred to, 153
 Tantalus, the thirst of, 276
 Thérèse, Mademoiselle, 251,
 277
 Thomas, Monsieur, 297
 Thomas' '*Marcus Aurelius*,'
 308

Trappe, Abbé de la, 66
 Turgot, Monsieur, 311

V

V., Madame de, 300
 Valdahon, Monsieur de, 222,
 250, 254, 312, 335
 Vallière, Madame de la, 65
 Vasa, badge of, 294, 305
 Vence, Madame de, 262
 Venice, Galileo at, 286
 Venus, Sophie compared with,
 238, 255
Veuve du Malabar, a tragedy,
 335
 Vincennes, fête de, 283
 Voltaire, dithyramb to the
 shades of, 279
 — the genius of, 186
 — line on death of, 200
 — '*Henriade*,' 183

W

Watron, 14

Y

Yakel, inhumanity of, 303
 Yariko, murder of, 303
 Young's works, 13

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
305 De Neve Drive - Parking Lot 17 • Box 951388
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90095-1388

Return this material to the library from which it was borrowed.



A 000 120 022 9

IN SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY

U